MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS

MECHA & MANGA

SOURCEBOOK

GRR2524



SOURCEBOOK

GREEN RONIN PUBLISHING

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ADVENTURE IS GO!





MECHA & MANGA

A GREEN RONIN PRODUCTION

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Mecha & Manga was typeset in ITC Quay Sans, designed by David Quay in 1990,
and HTF Gotham Condensed, designed by Tobias Frere-Jones in 2002.

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INTRODUCTION

North American superheroes blast evil with powers born from radiation, mutation, training, or magic, flying through the cityscape in their colorful costumes and protecting their secret identities. Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, their Japanese counterparts uncover ancient martial arts, pilot giant robots, and train cute little monsters, while worrying about exams and catching the attention of the overachieving popular girl or guy.

Mecha & Manga extends the possibilities of the main *Mutants & Masterminds* rules toward the far shores of Japan's *manga*, where nobody sees anything wrong with angsty teenagers piloting humanoid machines of mass destruction, where being an exorcist is a full-time and respected job, and where school girls routinely save the world from unimaginable evils.

WHAT IS MANGA?

In Japan, comics are called *manga* (with their Korean and Chinese versions called *manwha*), literally meaning "playful images."

Evolving from Buddhist paintings through the crucible of Japanese history and culture, manga expanded to target all sorts of audiences, rather than limit itself to a narrow demographic and a few thematic genres. The first step that the art and industry of Japanese comics took toward their current form was the work of Osamu Tezuka who, inspired by Disney's visual style, created works such as *Tetsuwan Atom* (aka *Astro Boy*). capturing the hearts of the public and opening the door for a new generation of *mangaka*, the artists and creators.

While equal in basic principles to Western comics, manga developed their own visual language and methods for telling stories. The difference in style goes beyond the big googly eyes (which Western artists begin to copy today), the diminutive mouths, and the almost non-existent noses. Manga artists make different uses of graphic elements such as panels, dialogue balloons, sound effects, and the omnipresent speed lines, not to mention cultural expressions such as the bleeding nose and the big sweat drop on the back of characters' heads.

MANGA AND ANIME

The success of manga in popular culture inevitably led to the adaptation of their stories to the realm of moving pictures, with *Tetsuwan Atom* once more paving the way for other animators. In its animated form, manga is called "anime," a word borrowed from the West. Anime developed its own language based on the groundwork laid out by manga artists, but soon enough, it found its own voice. Nowadays, the Japanese industry provides all sorts of animated works, from miniseries to full-length movies that push the boundaries of animation technology.

THE GENRE THAT ISN'T

Manga and anime are not genres in the common sense of the word; they are better described as media or artistic styles (although debate still rages about this). Manga can be used to tell stories in virtually all genres of narrative, from serious psychological drama to light comedies, although the most widely distributed titles fall within the fantastic genres such as fantasy, science fiction, and horror, with spandex-wearing superheroes practically unknown, even if plenty of equivalents abound on the shelves of specialized stores.

Manga creators produce stories aimed at everyone–children, bored housewives, company executives, everyone can find a title that will interest them. Because manga and anime cross the axes of multiple genres and have a wide demographic spectrum, the types of stories that they can tell are virtually infinite. For example, the theme of space exploration can be treated as a children's playful farce in a show like *Wandaba Style* or as a serious extrapolation of the social and psychological impact of the space race, as in the *Planetes* manga and anime series. The all-time favorite genre of sword and sorcery can be comedic, as in *Slayers*, classically epic, as in *Record of Lodoss Wars,* or even dreadfully gritty and horrific, as in *Berserk*.

THE DIFFERENCE

Boiled down to their most basic description, manga and Western comics are essentially the same. However, manga displays a unique attitude, a bold desire to explore the boundaries of genre and style for a wider audience at the same time that it caters to the base common denominator, without such explorations relegated to obscure corners away from the mainstream. Or, perhaps, the difference is simply that manga is produced by an exotic and distant culture, and their narrators provide their inimitable contributions to all the genres they touch.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Like *Mutants & Masterminds*, *Mecha & Manga* is organized into chapters covering the major aspects of the game, but this time giving it the manga treatment, exploring old and new options and how to use them to play an anime-themed series. The breakdown of the book is as follows.

- **Chapter 1** explores the different worlds of manga and how you can assemble different elements to create your own manga setting.
- **Chapter 2** deals with character options such as skills, feats, powers, and drawbacks that are common in manga, from those that already exist in *Mutants & Masterminds* to completely new ones.
- **Chapter 3** describes one of the main staples of manga and anime: mecha. This includes power armor, giant robots, and the different ways in which they can appear in a *Mecha & Manga* series.
- **Chapter 4** takes a closer look at martial arts, from the mundane styles of after-school clubs to world-shattering techniques, as well as how to use feats and powers to simulate them.
- **Chapter 5** describes pets, creatures that manga heroes can call upon to do their fighting for them or supplement their own powers and abilities.
- **Chapter 6** has loads of advice on how to run a manga-inspired series. Themes, concepts, clichés, and alternate genre-specific systems are the ingredients that both Gamemaster and players can use to create their own manga adventures.
- **Chapter 7** provides several story seeds that you can use to launch a *Mecha & Manga* series, as well as *Shards: Unsung Destiny*, a complete manga setting ready for use.

CHAPTER 1: WORLDS OF MANGA



Manga and anime can tell thousands of stories, but they have a few unique elements. Before you begin playing *Mecha & Manga,* you must decide what kind of story you want to create. Creating the story's setting is a step that the Gamemaster can do by himself before he gathers other players, or it can be a collective effort between everyone who will play, coming up with a setting that everyone will have fun playing in because everyone had a hand in its creation.

A setting is the world a story happens in; it has its own internal rules about what can exist in it and what cannot. It defines the boundaries, and in a way, it restricts the options available to the players. At the same time, the setting's definitions open many possibilities, as the players must think of innovative ways to guide their characters through the story, given the limits to their options.

There are two approaches to creating a manga setting, independent of how many people gather to create it. You can start with the chicken and create the setting before anything else happens or start with the egg and develop the setting once everyone says what kind of character he or she wants to play. Neither approach is inherently better than the other, so you can use the one best suited for your group.

This chapter gives you a few guidelines and hard rules about creating and running a manga setting, whether it is the work of a single Gamemaster or one or more players, and if this step is the first or the last when setting up a game of *Mecha & Manga*.

Creating a manga setting can be as simple as taking your favorite manga or anime series and recognizing its setting's elements and characteristics, or it can be as complex as creating everything from scratch and detailing every last corner of the world for players to explore and exploit. The steps for developing a manga setting are:

- **Choose a Genre:** This is the most general descriptor for a setting and implies several recognizable elements that it will have.
- **Envision the Scope:** This is the setting's level of complexity and how much juice you want to squeeze out of it.
- **Define the Setting Parameters:** Like fixing a dial, defining a Tech Level and power level gives a hard numeric value to the sort of things that the setting can include.
- **Decide on a Theme and Tone:** A matter of preference, the theme and tone of a setting suggests the kind of events that will happen in the story and how the world and the characters react to each other.
- **Include Story Elements:** Given a genre, scope, and parameters, adding elements is like making a salad, tossing in options available to the story's protagonists, including powers and descriptors.
- **Write the Synopsis:** In a few words, this simple aid helps to visualize the setting and describe it to potential players, getting them excited about it.
- See **Chapter 7: Manga Series** for a step-by-step example on how the main scenario, "Shards: Unsung Destiny," was created with these guidelines.

MANGA GENRES

For story purposes, the definition of genre is a category of artistic composition marked by a distinctive style, form, or content. A genre is a label that encompasses similar themes or elements to make it easier for people to find titles they will like. As artistic media, manga and anime can tell stories in many different genres, and before developing the setting for a game of *Mecha & Manga*, you have to start there, by choosing to which genre the setting will belong.

Genres are not straitjackets to lock a setting inside a narrow definition. One of the trademarks of manga and anime is the way they mix and match genres, forging worlds in the space where genre definitions overlap. When you choose a genre for your setting, keep in mind that you are free to select more than one, and that you can break the limits of any particular genre by borrowing elements from another.

"REGULAR" GENRES

The same labels that other media use to classify their stories can also describe the stories of manga and anime, although they bring their unique interpretations to them.

FANTASY

The most important definition of the fantasy genre is the presence of magic in one form or another. Fantasy is a very broad genre that has many subclassifications born from the way a story handles its magical elements.

Sword and sorcery deals with forgotten times (often medieval in outlook) and worlds where wizards wield magic and adventurers fight mythological monsters with spells and swords. *Urban fantasy* is often the territory of children's tales, with low-key magic intruding upon an everyday world ruled by science or coexisting with normal technological advancements.

- **Examples:** *Record of Lodoss Wars, Berserk, Claymore, Scrapped Princess, Princess Mononoke, Tales of Earthsea, Everyday Dreamers, Card Captor Sakura, Howl's Moving Castle, Mushishi, My Neighbor Totoro, The Cat Returns, Fancy Lala*.

SCIENCE FICTION

Where fantasy deals with magic, the focus of science fiction is, as its name implies, on science. Science fiction has even more subgenres than fantasy, as science and technology continue to evolve, and creators explore new avenues and new ways to look at the genre. Science fiction stories often focus on the cool gadgets, but the best stories deal with how normal people act around the technology and its impact on society.

Space opera deals with high adventure, with starships sailing across galaxies and many scientific developments that can (and sometimes do) cross over with fantasy. *Cyberpunk* explores a future where technology has created a hellish world dominated by the corruption of the powerful, destitution of the poor, human augmentation through cybernetics, and advanced computer networks, with a few rebellious operatives carrying out their exploits and alternatively hired and persecuted by governments and companies. *Post-Apocalypse* stories revolve around a cataclysm—natural, man-made, or as the result of an alien attack—that brought the end of civilization as we know it and the efforts of the survivors to rebuild or create a new society. The *scientific romance* is both the grandfather of modern science fiction at the hands of authors such as Jules Verne and H.G. Wells and a basis for the modern genres known as *steampunk* and *dieselpunk*, where alternate societies develop advanced technology based on the discoveries of the time, most commonly steam and fossil fuel technology, as well as early attempts at electricity.

- **Examples:** *Gundam Wing, FLAG, Vandread, Robotech, Battlecruiser Yamato* (aka *Starblazers*), *Martian Successor Nadesico, Armitage III, Dominion Tank Police, Ghost in the Shell – Stand Alone Complex, Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind, Ergo Proxy, Desert Punk, The Big O, Steam Detectives, Samurai 7, Planetes, Wings of Honneamise.*

HORROR

In *horror*, the supernatural is dark and dangerous and has it in for normal people. Monsters are not vanquished with a sword, as in fantasy, but are something that can drive people to madness or death, often to both. Horror is more open-ended than other genres and mixes a lot with them, as their focus is to depict and cause fear.

Gothic horror deals with traditional monsters such as ghosts, vampires, and werewolves, either by pitting hapless people against them or by using them as the story's protagonists. *Cosmic horror* is tied to the works of writer H.P. Lovecraft and his Cthulhu mythos, dealing with forces outside human comprehension that lurk in the shadows of reality, waiting for their chance to return and eat everyone. *Psychological horror* is normally devoid of the supernatural element, focusing on the monstrous aspects of people such as serial killers and psychopaths. *Survival horror* focuses on putting a person or group of people in horrible circumstance that they must survive (hence the name) with their lives, sanity, and even their morality intact.

- **Examples:** *Vampire Princess Miyu, Pet Shop of Horrors, 3x3 Eyes, Perfect Blue, Monster, Mermaid Forest, Mononoke, Night Walker, Silent Möbius, Chrono Crusade, Boogiepop Phantom, Vampire Hunter D, Requiem From the Darkness, Ghost Hound, Hell Girl, Death Note.*

DRAMA

Although the word "drama" means "movement" and is present in *all* interesting stories, as a genre label, it refers to stories where the protagonists' emotions are the engine that moves everything. Drama is a very, very broad category, as the cause of the portrayed emotions varies. Suffering and emotional pain are very common in drama, but they need not even be part of the story; they are just the easiest way to elicit an emotional response from the readers.

Family dramas tell the stories of a family and how it braves hardships together. *Social dramas* use the protagonists' misadventures to comment on social and political issues of importance. *War dramas* portray how people respond to the extreme situation that is being in the middle of a war, either as a combatant or any kind of civilian. *Catastrophe dramas* have the protagonists facing a natural or man-made catastrophes and pulling through them, while *psychological dramas* delve deep into the minds of the people experiencing life. *Romance dramas* are very popular and deal with the romantic entanglements of several people and how boy meets girl, loses girl, then recovers girl (a lot of permutations exist).

- **Examples:** *Candy Candy, Remi, Belle & Sebastian, Fruits Basket, The Virgin Mary is Watching, Video Girl Ai* (with a heavy dose of fantasy), *Gravion, Gundam Seed* (with a lot of science fiction), *Grave of the Fireflies.*

MYSTERY

This genre can have supernatural elements but does not in most cases. The focus of mystery is to present an enigma and to have the characters try to solve it armed only with their wits and resourcefulness. In the West, the detective story is the most famous example of the mystery genre.

Crime stories portray troubled investigators figuring out the clues to solve a crime of varying seriousness; the protagonists can be actual members

of law enforcement agencies, amateur investigators, or private detectives. *Thrillers* raise the stakes in a normal mystery by putting the lives of the protagonists at extreme risks as they delve deeper and deeper into darkness. *Technothrillers* are borderline science fiction, as the protagonists make use of cutting-edge technology and resources to solve the enigma, with the difference being that such technology currently exists. *Conspiracy stories* often have normal people stumbling upon dark and terrible secrets regarding obscure organizations or corrupt branches of government, fostering paranoia as the characters do not know whom they can trust.

- **Examples:** *Detective Academy Q, Great Detectives Poirot & Marple, Spiral, .hack//SIGN* (with a lot of fantasy and cyberpunk), *Paranoia Agent, Patlabor: the Movie, Serial Experiments Lain* (also with lots of cyberpunk and transhumanism), *Detective Conan, Steam Detectives, The Silent Service.*

ACTION/ADVENTURE

The genre's name pretty much describes it. Protagonists are immersed in situations of extreme danger, which they usually confront by violence or through daring feats of physical prowess. Lots of explosions are the norm in an action/adventure story, with characters escaping from certain death by the skin of their teeth.

Pulp is an often-whimsical action genre, where two-fisted scientists battle menaces ranging from Nazis to invaders from the planet Mongo to giant apes, mixing freely with fantasy and science fiction. *War action* depicts the exploits of the hero who, an assault rifle blazing in each hand, can wipe out hundreds of the enemy without delving too much into the emotional impact. *Martial arts* and *gun fu* stories are typical of the Asian action genre, portraying heroes who excel at the arts of unarmed and firearm combat, whether in ancient or futuristic times. Heroes jump, twist, kick, stab, volley, and perforate their enemies with wild and remorseless abandon. *Hunt* stories are all about the heroes running away from overwhelming odds or alternatively chasing after someone or something, such as a lost treasure.

- **Examples:** *Riding Bean, Gunsmith Cats, Noir, Gunslinger Girl, Madlax, Initial D, Dragonball Z, The Legend of Condor Hero, Cowboy Bebop* (against a sci-fi backdrop).

COMEDY

Comedy stories often belong to other genres but have a light-hearted approach, making them stand on their own, with the main objective of making people laugh. Exaggeration and suspension of the normal rules of reality are the norm for comedies. The *romantic comedy* is a popular version of the genre that takes the usual romance story and twists it around to make it funny. A *comedy of errors* takes the basic premise that all the protagonists are morons that misunderstand a simple situation so that hilarity ensues. The *parody* is all about making fun of another genre or even another specific work, taking its elements to ridiculous extremes.

- **Examples:** *Excel Saga, Love Hina, Azumanga Daioh, Slayers, Fooly Cooly, Abenobashi Magical Shopping District, NieA Under 7, Those Who Hunt Elves, Project A-ko, Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu* (spin-off of a slightly more serious anime).

HISTORICAL

A cross-genre that can take the form of another of the previous genres, its main characteristic is that it is set in some historical period, and such setting exerts a primary influence on the story's premise or development. Being Japanese products, historical manga and anime deal primarily with Japan's history, mainly the Heian, Sengoku, Edo, and Meiji eras. Sometimes the story takes place in China, with the rest few in other parts of the world and periods of history.

Samurai stories are set primarily in the Edo and Meiji eras, when the warrior caste prospered, but they focus on the role of such persons rather than the historical period themselves. *Ninja* stories are just the same, except that they are more peppered with fantasy due to the mythic status of ninja. *Alternate history* stories take the question of "what if *this* happened in *that* way?" and run with it, creating a setting of alternative history or even an alternative present that would have resulted had events in the past been different.

- **Examples:** *Samurai Champloo, Rurouni Kenshin* (aka *Samurai X*), *Wings of Honneamise, Jin-Roh, Otogizoushi, Lone Wolf and Cub, The Hakkenden, Bakumatsu Kikansetsu Irohanihoheto, Samurai Deeper Kyo, Peacemaker Kurogane.*

"UNIQUE" GENRES

Besides the regular classifications of Western media, manga and anime have developed their own unique genres. These unique manga genres are often the result of the hybridization of other categories, but they repeated a formula so much that they became genres in and of themselves.

SHOUNEN

Literally "young boys," shounen manga is all about the action, showing the adventures of tough characters fighting for their ideals. Character development and intricate plot twists are kept to a minimum, exalting manly virtues like courage, comradeship, honor, and persistence.

- **Examples:** *Bleach*, *Saint Seiya, Naruto, Hunter x Hunter, Scr.y.ed.*

SHOUJO

Literally "girls," shoujo manga is the counterpart of shounen, concentrating on girls as a target audience. Shoujo stories can be as action-packed as any other, but their focus is really on the characters' feelings and relationships with each other, inevitably including romance.

- **Examples:** *Fruits Basket, His and Her Circumstances, Revolutionary Girl Utena, Tokyo Babylon, Paradise Kiss.*

MARTIAL ARTS

An off-shoot of shounen manga, martial arts stories belong to the action genre but differ from it in their focus on the characters' training in the martial arts, be they the real traditions of both China and Japan or invented. There will be at least one tournament depicted in a martial arts manga, where the protagonists face off against each other to show who is the better martial artist.

- **Examples:** The *Legend of Condor Hero, Dragon Ball, Fist of the North Star, Ranma ½.*

MECHA

There is little as characteristic of manga and anime as giant robots. Mecha have crossed the genre barrier and appear in everything from quack comedy to military drama, having started in science fiction and fantasy. Some robots are intelligent, others are simple piloted vehicles, a few can transform into other types of machines, and others combine to form even bigger robots or vehicles.

- **Examples:** *Neon Genesis Evangelion, Gasaraki, Vision of Escaflowne, Macross Plus, Giant Robo, Soukyuu no Fafner, RahXephon.*

PET COMBAT

A relatively new genre, this story has the protagonists fighting vicariously through some sort of pet or entity whose sole reason for existing is to fight under the orders of its master. The pet can be a creature born of magic or technology, a mirage, a computer program, or anything else that acts as an

agent for the master's will. Most of the series from this genre are tied to commercial products.

- **Examples:** *Pokemon, Monster Ranchers, Digimon, Yu-Gi-Oh.*

MAGICAL GIRL

A venerable genre that is often the off-shoot of shoujo, magical girl manga has a very distinctive formula: a young girl is granted powers by a special (magical or technological) advisor so that she can defend her loved ones, people in general, or the entire world. The girl's adversaries tend to follow a theme, as do her powers. She may or may not have allies in the form of other young people with similar powers.

- **Examples:** *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon, Card Captor Sakura, Earth Maiden Arjuna, Corrector Yui, My HiME.*

HAREM

This unappealing name is actually quite appropriate for the genre. A lonely guy, frequently with one or more character flaws but a nice person nonetheless, suddenly finds himself surrounded by girls, some of them pining or lusting after him. Most harem manga belong to comedy, although the popularity of dating games and their adaptation to anime form has increased the number of dramas, and there is at least one horror title worthy of merit.

A very close genre is the *exotic girlfriend*, where the aforementioned guy gains a girlfriend that's not quite normal—she's a goddess, an alien, or the daughter of the local Yakuza gang—and having gained such an unusual partner, the guy is immediately beset by other girls who *just* noticed he's kind of cute.

- **Examples:** *Love Hina, Tenchi Muyo!, Oh My Goddess!, Lunar Legend Tsukihime, Seto no Hanayome* (for a girlfriend who's a daughter of the *mermaid* Yakuza).

DIMENSIONAL TRAVELERS

While certainly not unique to manga and anime, stories where ordinary people suddenly find themselves stranded in another world are very popular. In some cases, the travelers gain special powers by their crossing, or it is later revealed that they always possessed those powers and their trip triggered them. The world they travel to can be just about anything, from an epic fantasy setting to a dystopian post-apocalyptic world.

- **Examples:** *El-Hazard The Magnificent World, Dual! Parallel Trouble Adventure, The Mysterious Play, Magic Knight Rayearth, Now and Then Here and There, Kyo Kara Maoh!, Zero no Tsukaima.*

THE MANGA SETTING

A setting is as simple or as complex as you want to make it, and at this point, you want to make sure it is not so plain that you have to make things up during extended play nor so convoluted as to have a graphic novel's worth of notes go to waste from a game that only lasted a few sessions.

Some settings are so open and detailed that they can accommodate hundreds, if not thousands, of stories in them, sometimes not even with the same protagonists. Other settings are created for the purpose of telling a single story, changing or ending after it is done so that no more stories can be told with the same elements. Both types of settings are equally valid, and often the line blurs between these two types.

To help you envision the scope of your setting, use the formats that manga and anime adopt to tell their stories as a reference. Think about your game as a manga or anime series. Do you want it to be an ongoing series like *Dragonball* or *Naruto*, where there are stories after stories with no end in sight as the characters explore their world? Alternatively, maybe it is a one or two-season series where the story has a definite end and is told over 13, 26, or 52 episodes? It could also be like a graphic novel series or OVA (original video animation), telling a self-contained story over a few gaming sessions, or it could even be like a graphic novel or movie, with an even tighter story that will definitely end when the characters meet their objectives.

And, of course, there is the holiday special, a single session celebrating some sort of holiday that may or may not be part of the main story.

The shorter you expect a setting's gaming life to be, the less details you need to flesh out beforehand, focusing on those aspects that are important to the story. It is quite possible, however, that you like a short-lived setting so much that you wish to continue playing with it, spawning its own longer series and giving you the chance to increase the depth of detail of your initial creation.

SETTING PARAMETERS

A *Mecha & Manga* setting has two numeric values to describe it: the Tech Level (TL) and the power level. This is the only step of setting design that you cannot gloss over, since these values will affect how the characters' abilities will work.

TECH LEVEL

The *Mastermind's Manual* introduced the Tech Level (TL) option to help establish the availability of equipment and devices depending on the game's setting. In *Mecha & Manga*, it also determines its looks and style; the Tech Level describes the kind of technology and science that its societies have achieved. Although corresponding to rough historical periods, Tech Levels are *not* markers that reflect the Earth's history but simply a set of tiers to describe equivalent states of technological advancement. A setting's TL usually pervades all aspects of its society but, especially in manga, it is entirely possible that it has elements of lower or higher levels, such as a pre-industrial civilization whose warriors have swordfights riding on mecha.

Many manga authors treat technological progression more like a salad bar than as a list that obeys the laws of cause and effect, mixing impossibly advanced technologies with obsolete items. For this reason, *Mecha & Manga* classifies technology in five broad and vague levels, rather than the ten more specific and conjectural ones in the *Mastermind's Manual*. For manga heroes, the laws of physics behave more like sensible suggestions, and their technology follows suit.

ALTERNATE PROGRESS

While TL usually refers to normal science and technology as we know them, a manga setting can base its progress on entirely different factors, such as a society that has achieved all the comforts we are familiar with but did it with industrialized magic, biotechnology, or psychic potential. Alternate worlds somehow developed technology ahead of their time due to one or another event. A Victorian setting, for example, can have commercial air travel available thanks to the discovery of water that, when hit by moonlight, levitates anything that contains it. Consider these curious combinations to create unique settings where technology is not dependant on science or natural resources with which we are familiar.

MANGA TECH LEVEL COSTS

With fewer and more open Tech Levels, a GM can be more forgiving when figuring out the availability and purchase DCs of items of a higher or lower TL, making them unavailable, cheaper, or more expensive to purchase. For the sake of game balance, Gamemasters who want to make lower-TL and higher-TL items available to characters should adjust the purchase DCs of items as follows. An item has the TL of the highest TL-feature incorporated into it.

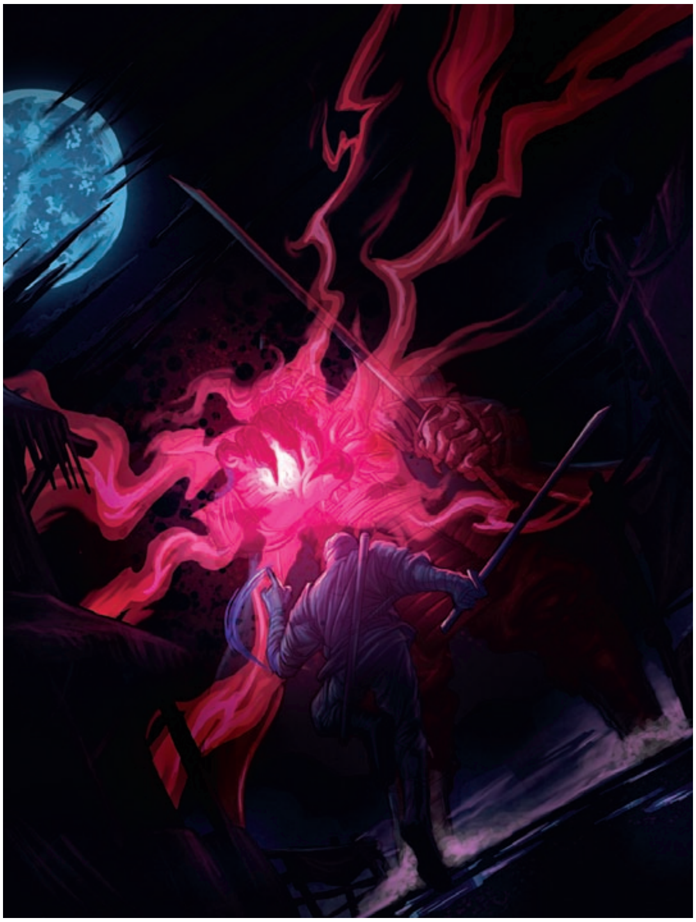
- –4 to Purchase DC or power point cost (minimum cost of 1) for each manga Tech Level lower than the current Tech Level, except in the case of valuable antiques.
- +8 to Purchase DC or power point cost for equipment from the next highest manga Tech Level (the limit for purchasing cutting-edge technology).

TL 1 – ANTIQUITY

Covering the progress of the Bronze Age through the Middle Ages, antique societies make their living through the use of crude agricultural techniques. Personal craftsmanship is very important, as there are no industrialized methods of producing goods, so individual artisans can become very well-recognized. Government is simple, usually based on a single figure of authority who dictates all the rules, with or without the aid of a small council.

Metallurgy appears and advances rapidly from working with very malleable metals to experimenting with alloys (bronze, etc.) to create a better material. Settlements range from small hamlets to large towns, but cities begin appearing as people specialize in different trades and gather for mutual protection, spurring the advancement of engineering and architecture.

Warfare evolves as a profession, with great warriors and strategists developing techniques and methods in a way similar to other artisans. Weapons favor melee combat, while ranged options require a great deal of skill to master, and their functioning depends on environmental factors such as weather and humidity. Armies try different tactics and formations and develop specialized training for the troops, and martial arts come into existence. Armor is bulky and expensive and comes in different makes and materials, from hardened leather pieces and small scales stitched to padding to complex chainmail and ergonomic full metal plate.



Travel and communication are slow, powered by sheer muscle (human or animal) or very simple machinery. Depending on terrain, a society can begin exploring and trading by land or water. Communication is limited to writing, either by hand or simple, low-volume printing presses, and conveying that information requires couriers and messengers.

- **Examples:** *Record of Lodoss War, The Mysterious Play, The Twelve Kingdoms, Claymore, The Story of Saiunkoku, Romeo x Juliet, Berserk*.

TL 2 – PRE-MODERN

Reflecting the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, science and technology become recognized disciplines in pre-modern societies, rather than part of a variety of professions. Exploration of ideas and techniques dominate this Tech Level, as people experiment and improve upon the advancements of previous times. Industry is born, thanks to the scientific discoveries that allow people to harness natural forces for their own use, and machines become easier to build and operate. New materials and construction techniques allow for astounding feats of engineering in record time, and a solid infrastructure supports society's development. Warfare changes as firearms appear, growing in power and efficiency and rendering armor obsolete, signaling the decline of hand-to-hand combat.

People begin to probe boundaries previously unreachable without technology, such as air and underwater travel, but these efforts remain limited to a few brave adventurers and innovators or the very wealthy. Commerce grows into its own, as the guilds of antiquity evolve into companies and corporations, and government inches away from monolithic and authoritarian systems like monarchy.

- **Examples:** *Vision of Escaflowne, Master of Mosquiton, Nadia: the Secret of Blue Water, Steamboy, Sakura Wars, Rurouni Kenshin, Chrono Crusade, Chevalier, Howl's Moving Castle.*

TL 3 – THE MODERN AGE

Covering the sliver of the 20th and early 21st centuries, modern societies are sophisticated and fully urbanized. Task specialization and professional training create thousands of little industries, as progress spikes in speed and scope, letting people achieve breakthroughs in scientific and technological research at a pace unmatched in previous levels. Subtle and more efficient forms of energy allow for machines to penetrate all aspects of life. Tools grow increasingly varied, allowing for greater individual independence in all fields. Automobiles become the standard means of transport, and communication methods allow people to contact each other from opposite sides of the world. The new frontiers are found in space and the deep seas. Computers and electronic devices make everyday life a lot easier (and at the same time more complex), and transnational corporations blur the lines between countries and states.

Old methods of combat become sports and hobbies, as professional soldiers require a completely different skill set than in previous ages. Automatic weapons dominate personal combat, while machines of war are capable of

great destruction, up to and including an atomic arsenal that can vaporize the planet in a matter of minutes.

- ***Examples:*** *Blood+*, *Love Hina*, *Ranma ½*, *Monster*, *Spiral*, *Vampire Princess Miyu*, *Golden Boy*, *Gasaraki*, *X/1999*, *Spirited Away*.

TL 4 – NEAR-FUTURE

From this point onward, progress is a matter of speculation, so it's hard to predict what shape society will take. Near-future societies take the prototypes of today and make them into off-the-shelf products, building some social impact out of their introduction as an exercise in extrapolation. Near-future settings usually take a couple of premises and push them forward to a future that is still recognizable but shows the premise's influence. The cyberpunk genre falls squarely into the near-future category, but other forms of science fiction can explore the evolution of today's technology in the same way. Note that a society that offers its members things unavailable to the modern age counts as near-future, even if their basis is magic or a technology not developed in our world.

Possible near-future technologies and their societies include ultra-efficient computers and the introduction of semi-sentient AI, along with more humanoid robots, early space travel and colonization of Mars, the Moon, and even the rest of our system's planetary bodies, caseless ammunition for firearms, advanced medicine and biotechnology, cloning, the rise of corporative states or stateless megacorporations, power through non-fossil fuels, early energy weapons, cybernetic implants, and power armor.

- **Examples:** *FLAG*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Blue Submarine No. 6*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Bubblegum Crisis*, *Cowboy Bebop*, *Silent Mobius*, *Planetes*, *.hack//SIGN* and its sequels.

TL 5 – FAR FUTURE

The science and technology in a far future setting are so advanced from ours that it is easier to accept that they just work than try to explain them, complying with Clarke's Law ("Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."). Things that are far-fetched theories today, as well as those believed to be impossible, are scientific fact in far future settings. Consider how a simple thing such as planetary rotation was believed to be crazy rambling when the prevailing belief was that the Earth was flat. In the far future, interstellar travel is so common that even fringe cultures can do it, and energy weapons are the norm rather than a prototype. Controlling gravity and the power of fusion is difficult but possible. Temporal and dimensional travel are the new fields for pioneers.

- **Examples:** *Lost Universe*, *Vandread*, *Legend of Galactic Heroes*, the whole *Macross* and *Gundam* sagas, *Sol Bianca: the Legacy*, *Heroic Age*, *Kenran Butoh Sai: The Mars Daybreak*, *Ergo Proxy*, *Stellvia of the Universe*.

POWER LEVEL

Just as a normal *Mutants & Masterminds* game, the setting's power level limits how much the characters can accomplish with their powers and abilities. In most manga, the characters actually start at a lower power level than the setting's, and their mission is to grow stronger and more powerful to defeat the villains who *are* at the setting's power level. They can also gain access to devices that are built at a higher level than theirs, giving them better survival odds in a world that's a lot meaner than they are.

A single character can rise above the setting's power level to emphasize his strangeness. In *Oh My Goddess!*, Keiichi (the main protagonist) and most of the supporting cast are at power level 5, at most, while Belldandy (Keiichi's exotic girlfriend and goddess of the present) limits herself to power level 10 but has been known to spike to power level 15 when extremely upset. Luckily for the world, she belongs to the romantic comedy genre.

NORMAL (POWER LEVEL 1-5)

This is the standard level for settings featuring normal people doing relatively normal things. Still, being a manga story, normal people can still be capable of amazing stuff, although they may not be able to leap houses in a single bound or destroy half a city block with a stare. Magic and technology can still grant normal people the ability to pull off extraordinary stunts, but there is always some sort of risk involved.

- ***Examples:*** *Perfect Blue*, *Azumanga Daioh*, *Planetes*.

HEROIC (POWER LEVEL 6-10)

Astounding feats of prowess are the norm rather than the exception for characters in a heroic setting. Braving death is second nature to them, and the powers they are able to wield reflect this. The opposition is just as powerful, however, and confrontations become charged with adrenaline as both sides use their above-average talents to succeed.

- ***Examples:*** *Noir*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *GetBackers*.

METAHUMAN (POWER LEVEL 11-15)

The protagonists of metahuman settings are naturally more capable than the norm, wielding abilities that far surpass the average with which we are familiar. Whether by supernatural or technological means, metahuman heroes have a lot of power, but they are still recognizable as normal members of their society when they are not displaying their powers.

- ***Examples:*** *Inu-Yasha*, *Naruto*, *Bleach*, *Darker Than Black*.

EPIC (POWER LEVEL 16-20)

The abilities that epic heroes wield are completely off the charts of anything that can be explained through normal means. These powers or technologies embody the dreams and nightmares of normal people as they enable the heroes to fulfill their innermost power fantasies, whether they handle their power with responsibility or not. Heroes at this level of power almost always have a reason for why they have their powers and a reason to use them, be it for personal gain, altruistic impulses, or preordained duty.

- ***Examples:*** *Saint Seiya*, *X/1999*, *Claymore*.

COSMIC (POWER LEVEL 21+)

The highest tier of power belongs to people who have the power of gods at their command (if they aren't gods themselves, of course). While not necessarily omnipotent, their strength is the stuff of legends. Characters with this amount of power in their hands are capable of destroying small moons with a single blast, and they are both threats and saviors to those weaker than they.

- ***Examples:*** *Dragonball Z*, *RahXephon* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* at the very end (protagonists have the power to shape reality by that point.)

COMBINING PARAMETERS

Tech Level and power level are completely independent from each other, and combining them serves to create a wide variety of settings at the points where the two scales intersect. For example, a space adventure set at TL 4 can have a normal power level as it narrates the lives of space workers and how they cope with their environment, or it can have a cosmic power level where the characters can command primal forces as they fight out cosmic battles in the void of space.

THEME AND TONE

The next step in designing your manga setting starts with fleshing out the actual story. You now know what genre it belongs to, how much detail you want to include, and a couple of values that describe generally what is available inside the setting's universe, so now is the time to define the kind of game you want to play. Note that theme and tone can change during play, as the story changes focus through unfolding events.

A theme stands for a general idea that describes the goal of the setting. It's usually a single word that colors everything that happens in the story as well as the way the different elements manifest in the game's world. A setting that has "hope" as a theme may confront characters with terrible odds and tragedies, but at the end, the heroes' efforts and sacrifices count for something. The same collection of odds and misadventures happen very differently if the setting's theme is "despair."

A game's tone depends wholly on the cooperation between Gamemaster and players. It can evolve on its own, or you can decide what it will be beforehand. The setting's tone is the general mood and seriousness of the story. Light-hearted stories and comedies are farcical and whimsical, and you can take a lot of liberties when narrating characters' actions, allowing for cartoon violence that has absolutely no effect and for amusing absurdities to creep into the gaming session. Serious stories are realistic in their narration, and setting the tone becomes an agreement between Gamemaster and players on what they are capable of playing through in terms of seriousness. Sensitive themes like crime, politics, and religion should be discussed beforehand when deciding on the setting's tone.

Some moods and tones are tied to particular genres and parameters. A normal power level lends itself to a serious tone, and you would be hard-pressed to find light-hearted horror stories.

STORY ELEMENTS

Adding elements into a setting is a lot like making a salad in which you pick things you like and dump them into a mixing bowl. You may already have an idea of what elements you want to include from the moment that you chose a genre, and deciding on the parameters may have given you more ideas.

The elements you choose to include will also give the other players ideas about what abilities and backgrounds to give their characters, and it is during this step that cooperative design can really pay off, as other players suggest elements you had not thought about or that do not appear on this list.

THEMATIC ELEMENTS

Thematic elements are concepts and clichés that are both the basis and the result of the setting's premise, building upon it by adding details that both GMs and players can use to flesh out characters and plots. The following thematic elements are typical of manga and anime stories, but this is by no means an exhaustive list. Creators constantly add new elements that become popular and part of manga's and anime's libraries. The elements of established genres are missing from this list, but that does not mean that you cannot include them in your setting; elves, laser swords, horrors from beyond, femme fatales, mad scientists, romantic triangles, and other elements from regular genres are yours for the taking.

Thematic elemnts from manga and anime include magical girls (themed powers, cute mascots), giant robots (great humanoid machines), weapon masters (any kind of weapon), special humanoids (elves, catgirls, mutants), student life (life in high school or college), "hammerspace" (extradimensional closets), romance (triangles, misunderstandings, and fulfillment), ESPers (psychic powers), alternate worlds (going through the looking glass), powerful organizations (conspiracy ahoy!), enigmatic invaders (aliens, demons, and whatnot), exotic girlfriends (way too powerful girls), tournaments/competitions (be the champion), teams (cooperation and member specialists), martial arts (for war or sport), mythic beings (dragons, kitsune, ghosts), gods and demons (coming down to earth), living dolls (intelligent robots with a soul), magic (traditional, mythical, or modernized), and cute pets (animal companions).

MECHANICAL ELEMENTS

The hard work of including story elements is the mechanical part of the game. During this phase, the Gamemaster decides what powers and feats are available to the characters, taking them from the core *Mutants & Masterminds* book or other sources, or creating new ones with the players' help.

Other things to consider during this phase are what is considered a device or an item of equipment in the setting's Tech Level, the addition of optional rules appropriate to the genre (like those presented in this book or the *Mastermind's Manual*), species templates, and predetermined power arrays.

A very simple rule that can greatly enrich a setting's flavor is the definition of descriptors. Beyond "fire," "energy," and "ballistic," a manga series creates its own types of matter, energy, and influences, classifying them in unique categories.

> ***Example:*** *In the Naruto manga and anime series, all ninja jutsu (the setting's name for powers and techniques) are not magic, per se, but trainable abilities that utilize "chakra" energy (known in other contexts as "ki," "inner strength," "Cosmo," or "the Force"). "Chakra" can be used as a descriptor so that powers and magical technology can be set to manipulate it, such as a power that deals chakra damage or a ritual that blocks all chakra-based powers in an area. In addition, ninja jutsu are divided into three main types: genjutsu (mind-affecting illusions), ninjutsu (powers with real and tangible effects), and taijutsu (sheer physical expertise). All three categories can be made into descriptors in a Mecha & Manga game that seeks to emulate the series.*

The GM can decree that any power adheres to one of the setting's descriptors or that all powers with a certain descriptor have definite prerequisites that cannot be taken as flaws or drawbacks to reduce a power's cost (in the example, all jutsu require forming a series of hand gestures). This makes strong powers more expensive and thus rarer, and it defines how the setting's powers work in its internal mythology.

THE SYNOPSIS

Once you are done designing the elements of your setting, writing a synopsis will help you envision all your choices as a consistent whole. A synopsis is a single paragraph that describes the setting in simple and succinct terms, written to sound like the back of a DVD box.

The Gamemaster can write two synopses, one for players to read that describes the setting and the basic premises of the story and one including some of the secrets and plot twists to introduce into the story at a later point, as well as the secret motivations behind the whole plot.

CHAPTER 2: MANGA HEROES



An anime or manga setting can be innovative and fascinating, but it is ultimately nothing without protagonists to explore it and weave their personal stories with that of the world around them. After deciding what kind of story you want to play with *Mecha & Manga,* it is time to create the characters that will live the adventures. This chapter expands on the character creation options in *Mutants & Masterminds* to include advice and new choices for creating a manga hero.

The chapter begins with various templates for species found in different settings and how to customize them. It looks at major character archetypes and various game traits (skills, feats, powers, etc.), including unique effects and powers. It concludes with character complications, drawbacks, and elements like personal quirks and description for well-rounded characters. You can find additional character archetypes for specific sub-genres in the following chapters as well.

SPECIES TEMPLATES

Manga of any genre routinely includes nonhuman heroes, from the trainable creatures of pet monster series to the inhuman things of horror stories. There's also perfectly human-looking beings that range from cute robot girls to tortured vampires and embodied gods.

If the manga setting allows for non-human characters, the Gamemaster can create a series of templates to represent the characteristics that members of such species have in common and that set them apart from mainstream humanity. Players can contribute during the design phase of the manga setting, as they may already have an idea of the type of character they want to play.

A template is a collection of predefined and hardwired abilities, skills, feats, powers, and drawbacks, and a player who selects one *must* include them in her character's traits, paying the appropriate power points (already listed in each template's description). This does not give them any advantage over human characters, since the humans will have the same amount of power points to distribute wherever they please.

Make sure that a nonhuman hero's traits do not exceed the setting's power level once the player finishes spending power points. If you have a starting power level different from the setting's power level (see **Chapter 6**: **Gamemastering** for the optional rules for power levels), make sure the nonhuman hero stays within these bounds. Alternately, you can raise the power level for the other characters so they start with equivalent limits, or you can simply accept this excess as part of the story's setup; eventually, the human heroes will catch up with the nonhuman ones.

BASE TEMPLATES

Each of the following templates is a generalization of a species type often found in manga stories. It provides a kernel of predefined traits that can be fine-tuned to represent the particular species best suited for your own manga series. Simply take or add traits from the template and alter its power point cost accordingly.

HUMAN

Humans are the base species for every anime and manga story, providing the standard from which other species vary. The true advantage that humanity traditionally has over fantastical and alien species is adaptability, represented in the total freedom a human character has when purchasing traits during character creation.

SETTING OPTIONS

All of them. Humans can be conquerors or conquered, mindless sheep or a puissant people. Most stories will have a human as the main protagonist, for her struggles are something that any player (or reader or audience member) can identify with.

TRAITS

Any that the setting allows for normal humans.

HUMANOID

Humanoid templates describe all species that look reasonably human (one head, two arms, and two legs), even if they are very different in appearance and in parts of their anatomy. Humanoids are divided into many subspecies, and each counts as a different type for the purpose of species descriptors. Humanoid species include humans as previously described, but also species like elves, dwarves, and aliens that are basically human except for a couple of extra features. It can also include more exotic humanoid species such as reptilian and insectoid humanoids.

SETTING OPTIONS

Humanoids are the dominant species in manga and anime stories, as they can adapt more easily to all the various genres. Humans are at the forefront of what a humanoid will be in a story, for they can be the protagonists of every possible story. Other humanoid species lend themselves to many adaptations, playing up their particular cultures and civilization in contrast with humanity's. In fantasy, humanoid races typically include elves, dwarves, gnomes, orcs, goblins, and even exotic fare like lizardmen. Science fiction brings in human-like aliens whose only physical differences with humans are a few facial features (like pointed ears or corrugated brows.)

TRAITS

Usually, you spend 2 power points to increase a starting ability score, paying it off with 2 points worth of reduction in another ability. Humanoid templates often include Super-Senses or Immunities to represent different physiologies, and feats and skill ranks to represent a cultural bias towards certain practices.

- ***Examples:*** *The Diclonius from* Elfen Lied (natural psychics), *Celsia from* Those Who Hunt Elves *(elf), Ghim from* Record of Lodoss War *(dwarf)*, *Kizna Towryk from* Candidate for Goddess *(cat girl)*, the *Newtypes from the* Gundam *saga, called Coordinators in the* Gundam Seed *retelling (natural spacers)*.

SAMPLE HUMANOID TEMPLATES

These are a few examples of humanoid species that can appear in manga stories.

NATURAL ESPER TEMPLATE

Abilities: Charisma +2

Feats: Fearsome Presence 1

Powers: Mental Blast 1 (*Alternate Power:* **Telekinesis 2**), **Telepathy 1**

Cost: 10 power points

Natural ESPers are just like humans, but they possess the innate ability to develop psychic powers. While human psychics will look completely normal, a naturally psychic species might display some odd characteristic, like strange hair and eye colors (a minor complication), a psychological compulsion related to the use of their powers (a 1 point Power Loss drawback), a complete lack of human emotion (a reduction of Charisma), or even deep genocidal inclinations (reserved for villains, hopefully).

ELF TEMPLATE

Abilities: Intelligence +2, Constitution –2

Skills: Knowledge (arcane lore) +2, Notice +2

Feat: Attractive

Powers: Immunity 2 (aging, sleep), **Super-Senses 4** (magical awareness, extended sight, low-light vision)

Cost: 8 power points

Elves are staples of the fantasy genre. In most cases, they follow the stereotype to a tee: they are ancient, wise, and skilled with magic, but in some settings, they veer away slightly, especially if the setting is not straight fantasy but science fiction or horror. Invariably, all elves have very long, pointy ears (often quite exaggerated), fair skin, and enviably long and beautiful hair (aesthetical complications that have no effects on game mechanics).

DWARF TEMPLATE

Abilities: Constitution +2

Skills: Craft (mechanical) +2, Craft (structural) +2

Powers: Immovable 1, **Super-Senses 4** (darkvision, detect unusual structures at range by sight), **Super-Strength 1**

Drawback: Disability (normal speed reduced to 20 feet, cannot use Acrobatics to extend jumps, –1)

Cost: 9 power points

Another fantasy import, dwarves are stereotypically great craftsmen, as well as warriors, with short tempers and long beards.

CAT PERSON TEMPLATE

Abilities: Dexterity +2, Constitution –2

Skills: Acrobatics +2, Notice +2

Feats: Instant Up, Second Chance (reduce falling damage)

Powers: Leaping 1, **Strike 1** (claws), **Super-Senses 3** (acute normal hearing, low-light vision, scent)

Cost: 8 power points

Usually these humanoids have cat-like ears, tail, or both, and they are sometimes also covered in soft, tawny fur. Also, most of them seem to be girls. The stereotypical cat girls are more often a publicity device rather than an actual character in professional manga and anime, but that doesn't stop

fans from using them. A common complication for cat persons is that they are easily distracted, particularly by fast-moving objects.

SPACER	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Strength +2, Dexterity +2, Constitution +2	
Skills: Acrobatics +4	
Feats: Environmental Adaptation (zero-g)	
Cost: 8 power points	

A spacer is a human whose family has lived in space for generations and has adapted to its alien conditions through accelerated evolution and genetic engineering. Spacers consider themselves the next step in human evolution, even if it was self-induced.

BEASTFOLK

The beastfolk template describes all the fusions between humans and animals that exist in traditional mythology as well as in many anime and manga stories. What distinguishes beastfolk from humanoids with animalistic features is that the fusion is much more bestial, giving the creature an anatomy that is clearly not human, with features such as wings, a tail, an animal head, snake hair, etc. However, there is still some sort of human-like shape to their bodies. A humanoid cat girl will only have cute ears and a tail, but a beastfolk cat girl will also have the head of a cat and retractable claws. Beastfolk would factor their bestial appearance as a complication in certain situations, depending on the setting.

SETTING OPTIONS

Beastfolk are popular additions to a fantasy world, offering options other than the typical elves and dwarves, especially if the world is based on different mythologies than the European ones. They are also popular as evil minions in horror stories, giving humanoid form to insects or ghastly creatures. In more modern stories, beastfolk are the product of genetic manipulation and are also the basis for alien species in science fiction. And, of course, there is also the possibility that the beastfolk are simply *just there*. Felines and canines are the most popular bases for beastfolk, but there are also tales of underage, shelled, reptilian martial artists to take into account.

TRAITS

Although, for simplicity's sake, most beastfolk are Medium in size, particular settings may demand that they be innately Small (5 power points) or innately Large (13 power points). Also, most beastfolk possess different sensory arrays than humans, such as bats, whose sight is not an accurate sense, but who possess the Blindsight Super-Sense, or dogs, whose sense of smell is both accurate and acute, in addition to having Scent as a Super-Sense.

The hide of beastfolk usually gives them ranks in Protection as well as Environmental Adaptation, and they have Strike (Mighty) to represent their claws and fangs. Optional movement powers include winged flight, superior land speed, burrowing, or swimming.

A few beastfolk will have the Disability drawback to represent impaired land movement due to short legs in relation to their body mass, diminished senses, uncomfortable opposable thumbs, etc. These disabilities will depend entirely on the proportion between animalistic and humanoid features, as allowed by the setting.

- ***Examples***: *Jajuka from* Vision of Escaflowne *(a dogfolk)*, *Meowth* from Pokemon *(a very strange catfolk)*.

SAMPLE BEASTFOLK TEMPLATES

These are a few examples of beastfolk species that can appear in manga stories.

BATFOLK	TEMPLATE
Size: Small*	**Attack/Defense:** +1*
Abilities: Strength –4*, Dexterity +2, Intelligence –2, Wisdom +4	
Skills: Intimidation –2*, Notice +2, Stealth +4*, Survival +2	
Powers: Flight 1, **Shrinking 4** (natural size; Continuous; Permanent; Innate), **Super-Senses 6** (extended hearing, sonar [accurate ultra-hearing], scent)	
Drawbacks: Disability (sight is not an accurate sense, –1 point), Power Loss (Flight, if wings are immobilized, –1 point)	
* from the Shrinking innate power	
Cost: 16 power points	

Short and sneaky, batfolk have big ears and membranous wings growing from their backs and arms.

BEARFOLK	TEMPLATE
Size: Large*	**Attack/Defense:** –1*
Abilities: Strength +8*, Constitution +4*, Dexterity –2, Intelligence –2	
Skills: Intimidate +4*, Stealth –4*, Survival +2	
Feats: Environmental Adaptation (cold), Improved Grab, Improved Pin	
Powers: Growth 4 (natural size; Continuous; Permanent; Innate), **Protection 1**, **Strike 2** (Mighty), **Super-Senses 1** (scent)	
Drawback: Hibernation (during winter bearfolk suffer a –2 penalty to all checks due to being generally drowsy, –2).	
* half of Intimidate and all of Stealth bonus/penalty come from the Growth innate power	
Cost: 16 power points	

Massive and hairy, bearfolk have big claws jutting out from their fingers.

CATFOLK	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Dexterity +2, Constitution –2, Intelligence –2, Charisma +2	
Skills: Notice +2, Survival +2	
Feat: Uncanny Dodge (hearing)	
Powers: Leaping 1, **Strike 1** (concealable claws, Mighty), **Super-Movement 1** (Wall-Crawling), **Super-Senses 3** (extended sight, low-light vision, scent)	
Cost: 10 power points	

Catfolk are sensual and alluring, with a hint of predatory danger.

DOGFOLK	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Constitution +4, Intelligence –2, Wisdom +2, Charisma –2	
Skills: Notice +2, Survival +2	
Feats: Improved Trip	
Powers: Strike 1 (bite, Mighty), **Super-Senses 4** (accurate smell, extended smell, scent, tracking by scent)	
Cost: 10 power points	

With a noble poise and fur, dogfolk tend to drool a bit.

ANIMAL

In animal anime and manga, intelligent animals replace humanoid characters. Most often, they live in a world of their own, ignoring the societies and cultures of the dominant humanoids, but other times, they are just another kind of creature that populates the world. Animals as a playable species are different than normal animals, starting with the fact that they are intelligent, even if the humanoids around them don't notice it. They may or may not be able to speak with the humanoids, but they can certainly speak amongst themselves.

SETTING OPTIONS

A setting that includes animals as characters has two choices: allow them to coexist with other species as part of the setting or make the story exclusively about the animals and their secret world. In the first case, the animal's intelligence may be due to scientific experimentation, a psychic power gone very wrong, or the blessing of a deity that liked the animal. The animal hero can also be unique or part of a species recognized by the world at large. In the second kind of setting, there is no need to explain the animal's intelligence; it is simply there.

TRAITS

Use the animal archetypes given in *Mutants & Masterminds*, **Chapter 11: Friends & Foes** as a guideline for determining most of the species' traits, but give them a normal Intelligence score. Animals who can talk do not have the mute drawback, and they only gain half the bonus power points if they can talk with other animals normally. Talking to both humans *and* animals is the power Comprehend 2 (animals or people, depending on the setting). Animals who can adopt a human shape have the Morph (single human identity; Metamorph) power.

- ***Examples:*** *The protagonists of* Wolf's Rain, *Luna from* Sailor Moon, *Kimba from* Kimba, the White Lion, *Mao from* Darker Than Black.



ARTIFICIAL

An artificial hero was built, not born, whether by a living creator or by other means. Because she is artificial, the character has very different needs than organic beings, and she can take any shape that her creators could imagine, from a perfect replica of a living being to a hunk of moving metal. Artificial characters can have a rich personality granted by advanced programming or divine intervention, or they can have just basic impulses, as they learn how to act around others.

SETTING OPTIONS

Most settings featuring artificial species have a Tech Level of 4 or 5 if the reason of the species' life can be found in science, but that is certainly not the only option. Golems and gargoyles moved by magic are as artificial as advanced robots. As with animals, it is possible to create a setting where *everyone* is artificial, such as a world of transformable robots that fight each other for domination of their planet.

TRAITS

Despite being technically "things," artificial heroes can have a Constitution score. For these heroes, Constitution does not mean general health and a functioning physiology but rather the solidity of their materials, redundant systems, self-repair mechanisms, etc. Their complexity warrants a score that mimics that of organic creatures and has no other mechanical effect. It is, however, highly recommended that they gain Immunity to several effects that their artificial nature would not be affected by, such as the need for food, breathing, sleep, etc., or going all out and become Immune to all effects that require a Fortitude save.

Many artificial heroes cannot heal damage without actual repairs (an appropriate Craft check, considered a complex task that requires tools); in this case, take the Disability drawback (major, common, –5 points). The artificial hero's capacity for recovery can be fine-tuned with the Regeneration power to represent a slow, self-repair system, possibly tied to a Power Loss drawback to represent what the hero needs to repair herself, like the availability of spare parts or access to an exotic energy source.

With GM approval, an artificial hero can purchase equipment features as feats, although most of them are covered by different powers that the hero can interpret as adding to her systems. If your game uses the Wealth score option, it can also be possible to actually buy powers as equipment upgrades, limited by the setting's Tech Level.

There are no assumptions when creating an artificial hero. She might have wheels instead of legs. He can be a tiny spy robot or a huge machine of destruction. She can be a cold and emotionless hunk of clay, or he can be an enthusiastic and empathetic boy robot.

- ***Examples:*** *Atom from* Astroboy *(robot)*; *Wrath, Lust, Envy, etc. from* Full Metal Alchemist *(homunculi), Pino from* Ergo Proxy *(robot), Major Motoko Kusanagi from* Ghost in the Shell *(cyborg), Hitomi from* Appleseed *(biodroid)*.

SAMPLE ARTIFICIAL TEMPLATES

These are a few examples of artificial species that can appear in manga stories.

UNDER THE HOOD: THE HALF-ANYTHINGS

Many manga stories are spiced with hybrids between humans and another species: half-vampires, half-demons, half-spacers, etc. Creating a hybrid template is no different than coming up with the template for the full species; it all boils down to choosing species traits and spending points on them.

For a more detailed approach, you must first define the species template for the parent species. After that, simply reduce the starting traits for the hybrid template. Most hybrids face complications during the story due to their mixed heritage, depending on how the setting treats the union of their parent species. Sometimes, the non-human half comes from a source other than simple genetics, such as a curse, symbiotic fusing, or a failed experiment.

A few hybrids display unique powers resulting from the combination of two species, or they might lack one of their parents' drawbacks.

- ***Examples**: D from* Vampire Hunter D *(dhampir, or half-vampire), Kurau and Christmas from* Kurau: Phantom Memory *(half-Rynax energy being), Mink from* Dragon Half *(half-dragon).*

SERVICE BOT TEMPLATE

Size: Small

Attack/Defense: +1*

Abilities: Strength –4*, Dexterity +2, Intelligence +2

Skills: Computers +4, Intimidation –2*, Stealth +4*

Feats: Benefit (concealed inner storage capacity 40 lbs.), Improvised Tools, Second Chance (Craft (mechanical) checks)

Powers: Communication 4 (radio), **Comprehend 1** (machines), **Datalink 2**, **Flight 1** (antigravitic thrusters), **Immunity 13** (aging, disease, emotion effects, poison, sleep, starvation, total suffocation, vacuum), **Shrinking 4** (natural size; Continuous; Permanent; Innate)

Drawbacks: Disability (mute, can only speak in binary chirps, –4), Vulnerable (ion/electromagnetic attacks, moderate, uncommon, –2), Disability (cannot heal unless repaired by a Craft check for a complex task, common, major, –5)

* from the Shrinking innate power

Cost: 25 power points

A floating ball, the service bot has all sorts of equipment protruding from its mechanical arms.

CYBORG TEMPLATE

Abilities: Strength +2, Dexterity +2, Constitution –2, Charisma –2

Feats: Second Chance (Computers)

Powers: Datalink 2, **Immunity 7** (starvation, aging, poison, total suffocation, disease, sleep), **Protection 2** (Limited to physical damage), **Super-Strength 1**

Cost: 13 power points

An android body encases a few organic components of a creature that was once alive. A cyborg is not a full construct, because of its vital organic components.

PERSONA TEMPLATE

Abilities: Intelligence –2, Charisma +2

Skills: Diplomacy +4

Feats: Attractive 1, Fascinate (Diplomacy)

Powers: Immunity 7 (starvation, aging, poison, total suffocation, disease, sleep)

Cost: 10 power points

An exact copy of a humanoid, a persona is made with organic materials but put together by technology. Pure white hair and a purpose of providing company to lonely people are complications that will come up from time to time in the form of prejudice and preconceptions.

GOLEM TEMPLATE

Abilities: Strength +4*, Constitution +2*, Intelligence –2, Wisdom –2

Powers: Growth 2 (natural size; Continuous; Permanent; Innate), **Immunity 12** (starvation, aging, poison, total suffocation, disease, sleep, emotion effects), **Protection 4**

Drawbacks: Vulnerable (water attacks, common, moderate, –3)

*from the Growth innate power

Cost: 16 power points

A golem is a magical lump of clay shaped in a humanoid shape, with basic facial features. They have very little in the way of skills.

OTHERWORLDLY

Otherworldly beings make a habit of visiting the world to get into trouble, most of the time of their own making. The name of "otherworldly" is a catch-all category to represent beings that have some supernatural or strange origin in another world and visit ours. These can be gods and goddesses, demons, faeries, spirits, or, in a more technologically inclined setting, aliens, artificial intelligences, extradimensional species, or sentient holograms. Otherworlders can look completely human, but their bodies sparkle with power, and they have something odd that tells them apart. "Common" alien species are better built with humanoid or beastfolk templates; otherworlders are meant for much stranger stuff.

SETTING OPTIONS

Otherworlders are appropriate to settings that implement fantastic elements and have a cosmology to support their existence and define their backgrounds. For example, an angel will be very different in a comedic setting where Heaven is run like an insurance company than in a deadly serious setting where the Apocalypse is playing out. Like artificial characters, otherworlders are rather rare, and there should be only a couple of them as protagonists, unless the entire setting revolves around them, such as a story about the four guardian spirits of the cardinal directions incarnating in semi-mortal bodies to search for an artifact lost on the mortal plane.

TRAITS

Their traits can be just about anything. Considering that superheroes are considered the gods of modern mythology, *Mutants & Masterminds* rules are particularly useful for creating otherworldly characters of the strongest caliber, particularly at medium to high power levels. The setting will determine what kind of otherworlders there can be as much as their powers,

because they depend on the cosmology to which players and GMs agree. For example, ancestor spirits can have the Insubstantial power as Permanent or switched over so that they are normally insubstantial and use the power to materialize. Stranded deities will have all manner of powers, usually with a descriptor tied to that for which they are deities. Disembodied AIs will have much the same traits as an artificial hero, plus Insubstantiality.

- ***Examples:*** *Belldandy, Urd and Skuld from Oh! My Goddess! (goddesses/fate sysops), Chrno from Chrono Crusade (demon), Aoi Enma from Hell Girl (death goddess), the Mu race from RahXephon (extradimensional aliens), Zepheris from Scrapped Princess (spirit/hologram), The Puppetmaster from Ghost in the Shell: The Movie (disembodied AI).*

SAMPLE OTHERWORLDLY TEMPLATES

These are a few examples of otherworldly species that can appear in manga stories.

KITSUNE FOX-SPIRIT	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Dexterity +2, Wisdom –2, Charisma +4	
Powers: Illusion 1 (all sense types; Phantasms), **Morph 2** (humanoid forms; *Alternate Power:* **Morph 3** [normal fox; Metamorph]), **Super-Senses 3** (darkvision, magical awareness)	
Drawbacks: Vulnerable (+1 to all saving throw DCs of powers from ordained human priests; note that a setting that allows kitsune also includes a common frequency of ordained human priests, –2), Hunger (must consume prayers or shrine offerings once per day or suffer a Bruised condition, –1)	
Cost: 12 power points	

A playful fox-headed person with effeminate features and multiple tails distinguish it from common beastfolk. Both the fox head and the multiple tails are complications.

ENERGY BEING	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Nonexistent Strength, Nonexistent Constitution, Intelligence +4, Wisdom +2	
Powers: Flight 1, **Immunity 10** (starvation, aging, poison, total suffocation, disease, sleep, vacuum, emotion effects), **Insubstantial 3** (natural form; Continuous; Permanent), **Morph 1** (any shape), **Regeneration 5** (+5 recovery bonus to heal as a normal creature)	
Drawback: Power Loss (Regeneration by failing to recharge at a high-voltage power source, –2)	
Cost: 19 power points	

A vaguely humanoid shape made of raw, coherent plasma, the energy being has come from another dimension to see what the fleshbags are up to.

NOVICE GODLING/DEMON	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Constitution +2, Wisdom +2	
Feats: Attack Specialization (choose one magic power), Favored Opponent 1 (otherworlders of the opposing supernatural faction)	
Powers: Magic 1 (choose any power), **Super-Senses 3** (mental magical awareness, detect supernatural beings by sight at normal range)	
Drawbacks: Weakness (–1 on checks after a minute of exposure to symbols of the opposing supernatural faction,-3)	
Cost: 8 power points	

A minor deity or demon sent to the mortal world to learn about humanity, the novice is undistinguishable from mortals.

UNDEAD

Undead are cursed creatures trapped between life and death, gaining the frightful powers of death but paying a high cost in the process. They exist in all of the world's folklore, and anime and manga have taken advantage of their popularity as well as the differences between the ghosts, vampires, and assorted creatures of the East and West. Most anime and manga stories pay only lip service to the specifics of undead legends in order to weave an interesting story, even creating their own rules based on the setting's cosmology. The most common undead creatures in anime and manga are vampires and ghosts, mainly because Asian myth is incredibly rich in the different types, and they have enough intelligence in them to be playable characters (the fun in playing a mindless zombie runs out within a couple of hours.)

SETTING OPTIONS

Undead are better suited to horror or fantasy stories, but comedy can use just about everything, so it is just a question of playing down the more horrific aspects of undead existence. Undead characters can be on a mission to recover their lost humanity, atone for the sins that caused their undead state, or simply embrace their new existence to explore new options in "life." In most stories set in modern times, the existence of undead is a secret, and the character must keep that secret from ever leaking out (as per the Secret complication). In other kinds of stories, undead might be an accepted fact of life, for better or worse; they can be hunted down like monsters or given jobs.

TRAITS

Like artificial heroes, undead characters have no Constitution score due to their being dead. Unlike constructs, an undead creature cannot be restored through scientific or magical repair, but seeks its sustenance and means of recovery through parasitical means, extracting the life essence from other living things or magical sources. An undead creature will have the necessary powers to gain sustenance or have the Regeneration power with a Source flaw representing the method by which she feeds. Like constructs, an undead hero needs 5 ranks of Regeneration in order to heal like a normal living creature, although many undead have a greater recovery rate, thanks to the life essence they steal from others.

Because of their lack of metabolism, undead purchase immunities very much like constructs, although some powerful undead are completely immune to anything that would target a living (sometimes even a physical) body.

Depending on the type of undead and the setting's mythology, a hero can have different powers and exist in different states. For example, some vampires are burned by sunlight (a major Weakness drawback), while others simply lose their powers in the day (a major Power Loss drawback). Some ghosts can possess people, while others simply prefer to scare the hell out of them.

- ***Examples:*** *Chika Akatsuki and Shito Tachibana from* Zombie-Loan *(revenants), Yukino from* Ghost Sweeper Mikami *(ghost), Kikyo from* Inu-Yasha *(dead spirit), Karin from* Chibi Vampire *(very unusual vampire)*.

SAMPLE UNDEAD SPECIES

The following templates are for the most common types of undead in the source material, vampires and ghosts, with the most basic traits and drawbacks for those types. Customize them as needed to fit the mythos and style of the series as a whole.

YOUNG VAMPIRE	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Strength +2, nonexistent Constitution, Charisma +2	
Feats: Fascinate (Diplomacy)	
Powers: Drain Constitution 2 (blood drain; Limited only to successfully grappled victims), **Immunity 30** (Fortitude effects), **Regeneration 6** (recovery bonus +0, recovers as a living being, resurrection once per week except when staked or beheaded; Source: blood drain)	
Drawbacks: Power Loss (daylight; affects Regeneration and all other powers the hero gains not listed in the template, –2 per power affected), Hunger (must use blood drain power once per day or suffer a Bruised condition, –2)	
Cost: 25 power points	

Pale and mysterious beings that stalk the night, they suffer a never-ending hunger for blood. Most vampire heroes reject the natural path of evil of their species and seek to atone for past sins, usually fighting against their own brethren on behalf of humans.

GHOST	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Nonexistent Strength, nonexistent Constitution, Charisma +4	
Powers: Flight 1 (Limited, cannot fly higher than 3o feet), **Insubstantial 4** (natural state; Continuous; Permanent; Innate), **Invisibility 1** (normal vision), **Regeneration 6** (recovery bonus +0, recovers as a living being; resurrection once per week unless remains or tomb are destroyed; Source [emotion dependence]), **Telekinesis 1** (Precise; Affects Corporeal)	
Drawbacks: Vulnerable (holy magic powers, minor, –1), Weakness (must make a Will save DC 20 to cross wards against spirits and ghosts, –3)	
Cost: 16 power points	

Ghosts are translucent creatures that remain after their deaths to deal with unfinished business. They feed on emotion and memory and seek it in order to remain tied to the living world. A ghost can only recover from damage if, in that day, she suffers or is witness to an emotion effect (as per the Emotion Control power). Gaining a hero point due to an emotional complication (a living loved one is placed in mortal danger, for example) or witnessing such gain by other characters can sustain the ghost for a whole week.

CUSTOMIZING A TEMPLATE

The base templates are only suggestions for the bare minimum traits a member of the suggested species would have. Any given manga setting can follow different rules, depending on its mythology and internal logic, requiring you to fine-tune the base templates (if not add new ones altogether) to add the traits you want all members of such species to have in your story. For example, a series where grim reapers have their headquarters in the Realm of the Dead will require all grim reapers to have the Super-Movement (Dimensional) power in order to travel to the mortal world. A series where genetic tampering has created psychic animals will add psychic-themed powers to the base animal templates. Perhaps a story's psychic humans depend on parasitic symbiotes to use their powers, suffering a series of standardized flaws and drawbacks.

ABILITIES

Different species have different strengths and weaknesses. Humans are the base average in most settings, and therefore, they have base ability scores



of 10. Species that are innately tougher, stronger, faster, smarter, wiser, or more charismatic will include the power point cost for a higher starting ability, often balanced with a reduction of another ability. You can raise the ability scores as normal, with power points.

SPECIES BONUSES

Skill ranks, minimum save bonuses, and starting feats are very common species traits, representing a cultural bias, anatomical ease, magical gift, or simply natural talent. As with abilities, the total bonus of species traits cannot exceed the setting's power level.

SIZE

A species can be of a different size than the human average. It's recommended that a species meant to be used for heroes remain between Small and Large, with more flexibility going to the smaller size categories than to the bigger ones. Both larger and smaller sizes are basically the Growth and Shrinking powers with the Innate power feat and a Permanent duration (see **Size** on page 34 of *Mutants & Masterminds*).

SPECIES TRAITS

What really set species apart are their special abilities. Most of these special traits are handled as a combination of feats and powers, with their own extras, flaws, and feats that cannot be changed, although heroes may expand upon their innate abilities. Note that if a template's power has extras and flaws that alter their cost per rank, expanding upon it costs the altered amount of power points per rank.

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

Manga contains a wide variety of genres that defy classification, but there are still very identifiable archetypes that appear in one form or another. The following character archetypes are representative of different kinds of manga stories, and thus they are built at different power levels to best fit their genre. You can find the Ace Mecha Pilot, Mobile Armor Trooper, Ninja, Super Martial Artist, Pet Monster Trainer, and Summoner in **Chapter 3: Mecha**, **Chapter 4: Martial Arts,** and **Chapter 5: Pets** respectively; these archetypes are representative of the manga and anime genres described in those chapters.

The archetypes can share a series' spotlight with characters of different types or other archetypes, such as a team of Magical Girls or the lone Magical Girl and her small group of non-powered (but equally capable) friends.

CHILD ASSASSIN

There is little more ruthless than training a child to become a cold-blooded murderer, but there are organizations in the world that think such projects are a great idea. A child assassin looks sweet and innocent on the outside, even if sometimes a little sad, but she is trained in every deadly martial art and is an expert with every lethal weapon in existence. Alternating between growing up and terminating her targets, a child assassin's life is marked by tragedy.

- ***Examples:*** *The protagonists of* Gunslinger Girl*, Kirika Yumura from* Noir*, Ein and Zwei from* Phantom: the Animation.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL IDIOT

There are people who fight to achieve glory, who strive relentlessly to overcome the designs of fate, or who put every ounce of their being towards achieving their goals. The circumstantial idiot is not one of them. This loser possesses some sort of divine guidance or epic-level resistance that saves him from his own incompetence, because he always ends up at the wrong place at the wrong time, just in time to rise to the occasion and overcome his many flaws, or remain oblivious and save the day by dumb luck or a flash of oblique genius.

- ***Examples:*** *Justy Ueki Tylor from* Irresponsible Captain Tylor*, Satou Tatsuhiro from* Welcome to the NHK*, Keitaro Urashima from* Love Hina.

COOL SEMPAI

Everyone wants to be like the upperclassman; she's the prettiest, smartest, kindest person in the whole school. With the best grades, an amiable personality, multiple talents, and stunning looks, the cool upperclassman is an undisputed queen (or king, in the case of the guys). But, being everybody's friend, role model, or target of affections can be exhausting, and the cool sempai has inner demons to fight too, from hidden insecurities to raging dark secrets.

- ***Examples:*** *Ayu "The Cool Beauty" Tateishi from* Ultra Maniac*, Shizuru Fujino from* My HiME*, Souichirou Arima from* His and Her Circumstances.

ESPER

Gifted with incredible powers, the ESPer is set apart from average humanity. Some ESPers attribute their supernatural abilities to divine gift, others to scientific achievements. Others just have them, and woe to those who dare stand in their way. ESPers can live hidden from the rest of society or rise to become feared assassins or ruthless tyrants. But, for every ESPer who turns to evil, there will be those who harness their power for good.

- ***Examples:*** *Kamui from* X/1999*, Yuki from* Silent Möbius*, Tetsuo from* Akira.

EXILED DEITY

Something went horribly wrong in the goddess's latest assignment, and now she finds herself stuck in the world of mortals. The exiled deity can keep none, some, or all of her divine gifts, but that doesn't mean that she's allowed to use them or that they will be at all useful. She must stay on Earth and keep fulfilling her divine tasks, while she finds a way (and if she gets too attached to her new friends, a reason) to return home.

- ***Examples:*** *Loki from* Detective Loki*, Washu from* Tenchi Muyo!*, Rukia Kushiki from* Bleach

EXORCIST

In a world beset by supernatural threats, an exorcist's services are in high demand, even if his business card causes the skeptic to snicker and believe him a charlatan. Combining detective skills with supernatural knowledge (and sometimes a fair amount of combat training), an exorcist seeks out ghosts, spirits, demons, witches, vampires, and other otherworldly threats from which to protect humanity. Sometimes he even gets paid.

- ***Examples:*** *Robin Sena from* Witch Hunter Robin*, Ginko from* Mushishi*, Alexander Anderson from* Hellsing.

FUTURE WARRIOR

Nobody knows better how present society screwed up than someone who is stuck with fixing things a couple of decades down the line. The future warrior has traveled through time to find the root of some dire problem and deal with it before it possibly destroys the planet during her time, laws of cause and effect be damned. Armed with superior technology, strange powers, or just a secret agenda, the future warrior soon learns that the present is not what it was supposed to be.

- ***Examples:*** *Trunks from* Dragonball Z*, Karin Aoi from* DNA2*, Mikuru Asahina from* The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya.

IDOL

Stranger than a fictional fantasy world is the pop idol music industry, especially when it overlaps intergalactic warfare, murder mysteries, or metaphysical strangeness. The idol is the star of the show, the darling of crowds,

"MY ATTACK DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!"

Unlike archetypes in other *Mutants & Masterminds* products, the following manga heroes are built with high defensive scores. This represents how, in many manga and anime, heroes as well as villains get hit repeatedly with otherwise lethal attacks, but they keep fighting, despite having previously gushed out 18 gallons of blood, or they walk out of the ruins of a building that was pulverized by enemy fire, a little dusty, but still strong. If you are using these archetypes with other genres, feel free to adjust the saves so they get hurt more easily.

CHILD ASSASSIN POWER LEVEL 7

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+4	+0	+1	+2	+2
8	18	10	12	14	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+3/-1*	+4	+12	+7

*flat-footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Bluff 11 (+13), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Disguise 10 (+12), Escape Artist 10 (+14), Knowledge (current events) 3 (+4), Knowledge (streetwise) 7 (+8), Notice 10 (+12), Profession (assassin) 8 (+10), Search 7 (+8), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 10 (+18)

Feats: Attack Focus 2 (ranged), Attack Specialization (assassin's rifle), Benefit (lieutenant rank in black ops organization), Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 2, Equipment 2, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Aim, Improved Critical 1 (rifles), Improved Initiative, Kawaii 2[1] (Bluff), Precise Shot 2, Ranged Pin, Second Chance (Stealth), Sneak Attack

Equipment: Cell phone, disguise kit, light pistol (ballistic damage +3, critical 19-20, 20-ft. increment), PDA

POWERS

Device 4 (easy to lose)

Shrinking 4 (natural childhood Small size; Continuous; Permanent; Innate)

High-Powered Assassin's Rifle: **Blast 5** (ballistic; Penetrating; Improved Range, Precise, Subtle 2; *Alternate Power:* **Morph 5** [single form as a violin case])

Combat: Attack +2 (melee), +4 (ranged), +6 (assassin's rifle), Grapple –4, Damage –1 (unarmed), +3 (light pistol), +5 (assassin's rifle), +7 (assasin's rifle and sneak attack), Defense +6 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback –0, Initiative +8

Drawback: Low Pain Threshold[1] (–1 to all checks when Injured or Bruised, –1)

Abilities 20 + Skills 21 (84 ranks) + Feats 23 + Powers 17 + Combat 8 + Saves 17 – Drawbacks 1 = 105



CIRCUMSTANTIAL IDIOT — POWER LEVEL 7

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+0	+4	+0	-1	+0
10	10	18	10	8	10

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/+4*	+12	+12	+4

*When Protection fails, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+8), Bluff 8 (+8), Disguise 8 (+8), Escape Artist 12 (+12), Sense Motive 10 (+9), Stealth 8 (+8), Survival 10 (+9)

Feats: Endurance 2, Evasion 2, Improved Block 4, Improved Pin, Instant Up, Luck 3, Redirect, Uncanny Dodge (hearing)

POWERS

Luck Control 2 (cancel GM fiat, force others to reroll)
Protection 4 (Impervious; Unreliable)
Regeneration 24 (ability damage 1/5 minutes, recovery bonus 5, bruised/injured 1/round, staggered/disabled 1/5 minutes, resurrection 2; cannot resurrect while the body is being watched)
Shield 6 (arm raised in panic)
Super-Movement 2 (slithering, slow fall, permeate [leave narratively dramatic hole in the wall that closes before it's actually useful, Unreliable])

Combat: Attack +1, +9 (block), Grapple +1, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +6 (from Shield, +0 flat-footed), Knockback -8/-2, Initiative +0

Drawbacks: Curse[1] (gain Interpose but it works against your will, uncommon, moderate, -2 points)

Abilities 6 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 15 + Powers 43 + Combat 2 + Saves 25 – Drawbacks -2 = 105

"OH, DEAR GOD, NOT AGAIN."



COOL SEMPAI POWER LEVEL 6

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3
14	14	14	14	14	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+2	+7	+7	+8

[1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+6), Bluff 4 (+7), Computers 4 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+7), Gather Information 6 (+9), Intimidate 4 (+7), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 6 (+8), assign 20 ranks among your choice of Craft, Knowledge and Perform skills

Feats: Attractive 2, Beginner's Luck, Bishounen/Bishoujo[1] 3, Connected, Environmental Adaptation (crowds), Fascinate (Diplomacy), Jack-of-all-Trades, Uncanny Dodge (sixth sense), Well-Informed

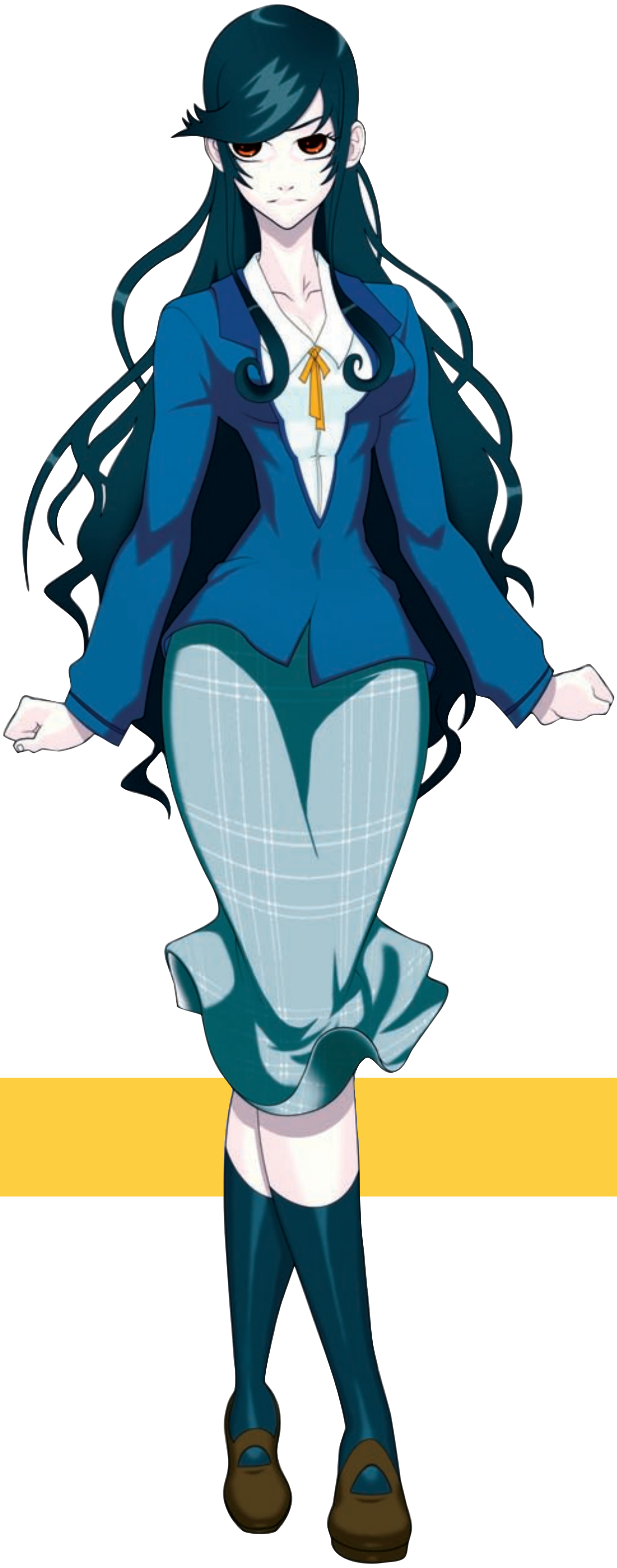
POWERS

Emotion Control 6 (One Emotion [love], Uncontrolled)
Stun 6 (meaningful gesture; Perception Range, Will save; Sense-Dependent [sight], Limited to persons who would be attracted to you, Action [full action])

Combat: Attack +3, Grapple +5, Damage +2 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback –1, Initiative +2

Abilities 26 + Skills 14 (56 ranks) + Feats 12 + Powers 8 + Combat 14 + Saves 16 = 90

"DON'T WORRY; I'LL LOOK AFTER YOU."



ESPER — POWER LEVEL 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+1	+0	+1	+2	+3
9	12	10	13	15	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/+6*	+8	+7	+14

*flat-footed; +0 without force field, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Bluff 6 (+9), Concentration 12 (+14), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Intimidate 12 (+15), Notice 10 (+12), Search 10 (+11), Sense Motive 6 (+8)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Attack Specialization (Mental Blast), Beginner's Luck, Deep Ties[1] (pick one for your story), Defensive Roll 2, Distract (Intimidate), Fearless, Fearsome Presence 4, Startle

POWERS

ESP 3 (sight; Subtle)
Flight 3
Force Field 6 (telekinetic)
Mental Blast 7 (Mental Weapon)
Telekinesis 8 (Damaging; Accurate; *Alternate Powers*: **Blast 10** [telekinetic lances; Accurate, Indirect 2, Split Attack, Subtle], **Shield 7** [telekinetic; Affects Others including self, Burst Area; Progression (increase area)], **Telekinesis 11** [Perception Range; Distracting; Precise], **Trip 8** [Knockback, Line Area])

Combat: Attack +6, +8 (Blast, Mental Blast, Telekinesis), Grapple +5 (unarmed), +14 (damaging telekinesis), +17 (perception and precise telekinesis), Damage –1 (unarmed), +10 (Blast), +7 (Mental Blast), +8 (Telekinesis), Defense +10/+3 without Shield (+2 flat-footed), Knockback –4/–0, Initiative +1

Abilities 15 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 13 + Powers 62 + Combat 18 + Saves 26 = 150

"YOUR ATTEMPTS TO STOP ME ARE AMUSING."



EXILED DEITY — POWER LEVEL 15

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3
16	16	16	16	16	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+15/+13*	+15	+15	+15

*flat-footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills[2]: Concentration 11 (+14), Diplomacy 15 (+18), Knowledge (arcane) 12 (+15), Language 4 (Native supernatural language, Language of the deity's main worshippers, Japanese, English), Notice 15 (+18), Sense Motive 15 (+18)

Feats[2]: Attack Focus 5 (choose melee or ranged), Attack Specialization (choose one favored attack), Benefit (recognition and deference of supernatural creatures), Defensive Roll 2, Favored Opponent 3 (+3 against a particular enemy species of the deity's pantheon), Inspire 5, Leadership, Luck 4, Ritualist, Ultimate Effort (choose a skill and task the deity is known for)

POWERS

Adaptation 3
Flight 4
Protection 10
Regeneration 8 (recovery bonus +6, resurrection once per day unless violating the pantheon's orders)
Super-Senses 3 (mental magical awareness, detect supernatural as a sense)
Godly Gifts (30 power points to buy powers with the "Control" word in their names, Enhanced Abilities, Magic, and Device, including alternate powers; godly gifts must correspond to the deity's concept, such as Plant Control for a nature goddess or a collection of harming powers for a god of war)

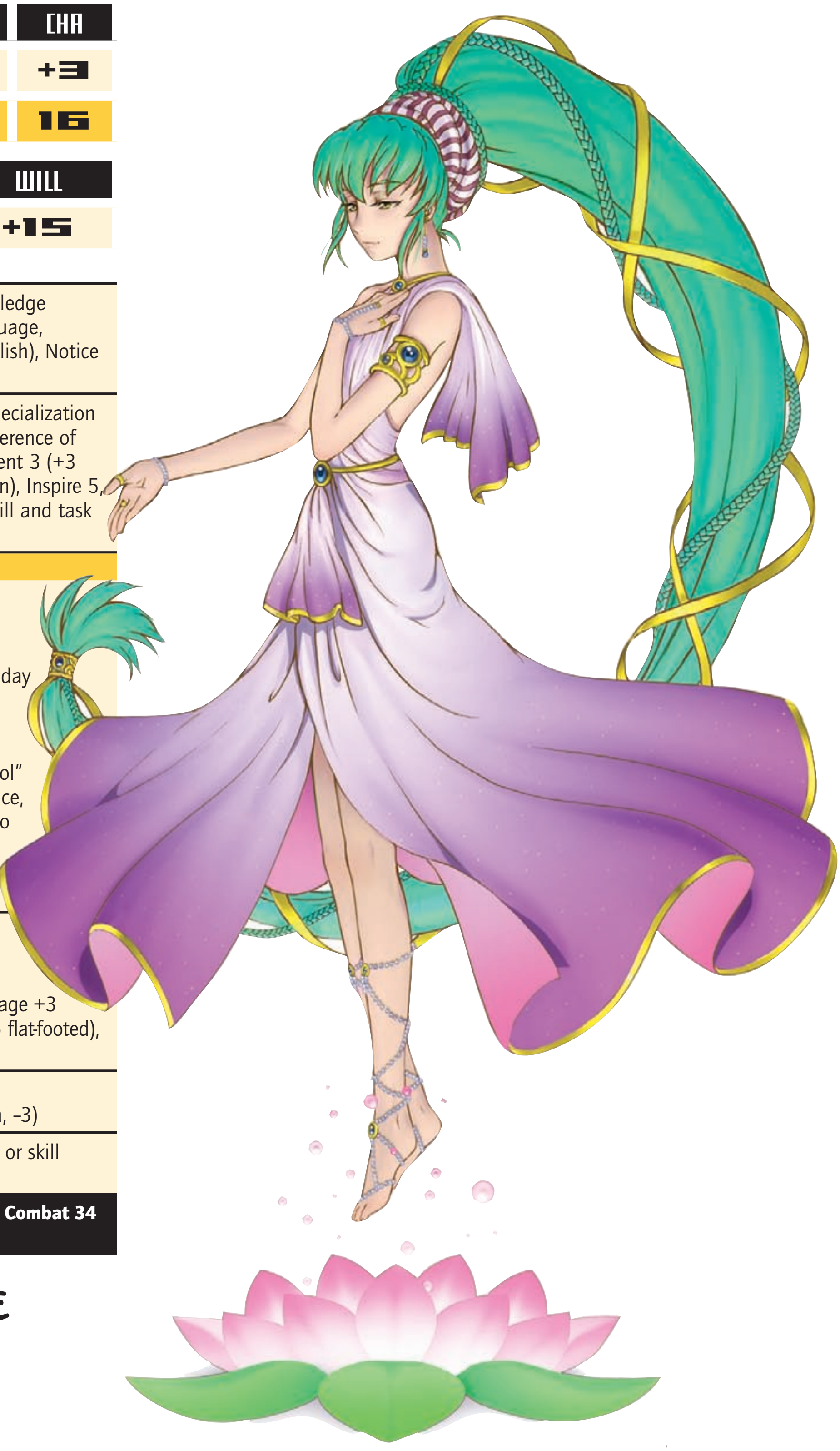
Combat: Attack +7, +12 (melee or ranged as per the Attack Focus choice), +14 (with chosen melee or ranged attack as per the Attack Focus and Attack Specialization choices), Grapple +10 (or +16 as per the Attack Focus choice), Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +10 (+5 flat-footed), Knockback –7 (–6 flat-footed), Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Weakness (–1 on checks after a minute of exposure to symbols of the opposing supernatural faction, –3)

Note: [2] You have 3 power points to choose additional feats or skill ranks that reflect the deity's concept

Abilities 36 + Skills 18 (72 ranks) + Feats 24 + Powers 77 + Combat 34 + Saves 36 + Other 3 – Drawbacks -3 = 225

"BY THE POWER OF THE HEAVENS, I... OH, MY... BUSY SIGNAL."



EXORCIST POWER LEVEL 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+3	+1	+2	+0
15	14	16	12	14	10

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+7/+5*	+8	+8	+11

*flat-footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 7 (+9), Concentration 10 (+12), Drive 8 (+10), Investigate 7 (+8), Knowledge (arcane lore or religion) 12 (+13), Notice 12 (+14), Search 8 (+9), Survival 12 (+14)

Feats: Attack Focus (melee) 4, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 3, Favored Opponent 2 (demons), Favored Opponent 2 (choose one), Fearless, Improved Critical (Strike), Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Instant Up, Ritualist, Track, Uncanny Dodge (detect supernatural Super-Sense)

Equipment: Armored trenchcoat (Toughness +2), camera, maps, motorcycle, multi-tool, night-vision goggles

POWERS

Banish[1] **3** (Linked [Strike], Universal)
Expel Demon[1] **6** (*Alternate Power:* **Expel Ghost**[1] **6**)
Immunity 2 (infernal magic)
Nullify Magic 10 (one demonic power at a time; *Alternate Powers:* choose two more creature types whose magic you can nullify)
Strike 8 (holy, Linked [Banish]; Accurate, Affects Insubstantial)
Super-Senses 5 (detect supernatural as a free action, sense is accurate and ranged)

Combat: Attack +4 (ranged), +8 (melee), +10 (Strike), Grapple +10, Damage +2 (unarmed), +8 (Strike), +10 (Strike against demons and one other supernatural species), Defense +5 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +2

Abilities 21 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 21 + Powers 51 + Combat 18 + Saves 20 = 150

"RETURN TO DARKNESS, ABOMINATION!"



FUTURE WARRIOR POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+0	+1	+2	+2
13	16	11	13	15	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/+5*	+6	+10	+9

*flat-footed, +0 without armor, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+9), Bluff 8 (+10), Computers 10 (+11), Craft (mechanical) 7 (+8), Diplomacy 5 (+7), Disguise 5 (+7), Drive 5 (+8) Gather Information 7 (+9), Knowledge (history) 6 (+7), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+9), Notice 5 (+7), Pilot 5 (+8), Stealth 7 (+10)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 2, Beginner's Luck, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 10, Inventor, Online Research[1], Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Second Chance 2 (Notice checks to avoid surprise, Knowledge (history) checks to remember important facts about the present), Sneak Attack 2, Tech Familiarity[1] (present day), Well-Informed

Equipment: Futuristic armored jumpsuit (Toughness +5), blaster pistol, Technodyne Chronobike (Motorcycle; Strength 20, Speed 5, Defense 10, Toughness 8, Medium; **Blast 5** [energy], **Flight 5**, **Super-Movement 1** [temporal to a fixed future date; Limited to travel under specific chronal conditions], **Super-Senses** [radio])

POWERS

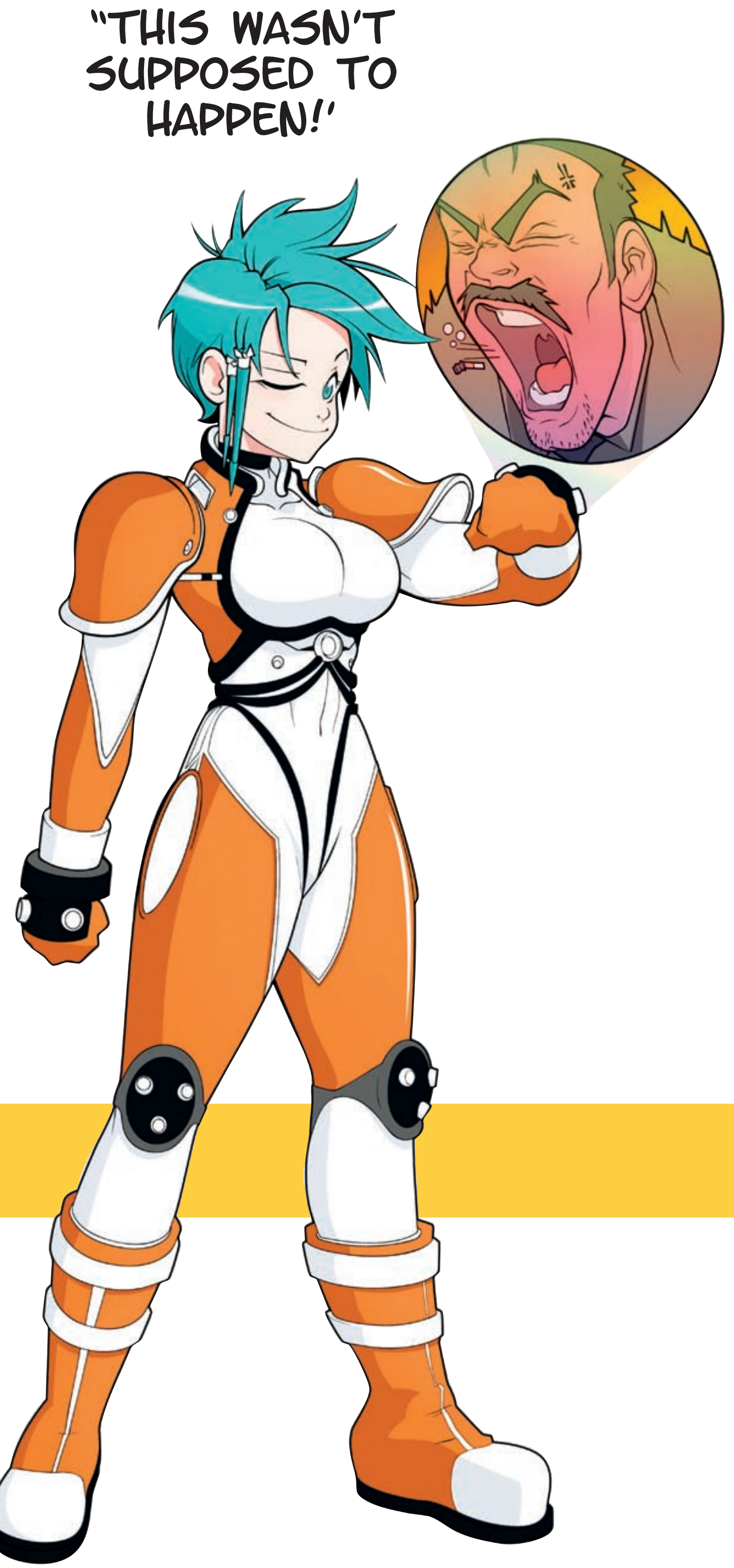
Device 3 (hard to lose, wrist-mounted photobending field generator and sight-enhancing sunglasses)

Wrist-Mounted Photobending Field Generator: **Shield 5** (Continuous; *Alternate Powers:* **Concealment 5** [all visual and radar], **Morph 5** [any humanoid; Limited to clothes])

Sight-Enhancing Sunglasses: **Super-Senses 3** (extended sight, infravision, direction sense)

Combat: Attack +6 (melee), +9 (ranged), Grapple +7, Damage +1 (unarmed), +5 (blaster pistol), +5 (bike blaster), Defense +8 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback –4, Initiative +3

Abilities 22 + Skills 21 (84 ranks) + Feats 27 + Powers 12 + Combat 18 + Saves 20 = 120



IDOL — POWER LEVEL 5

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+2	+1	-1	+1	+4
8	14	12	9	13	18

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+3/+1*	+4	+7	+3

* flat-footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Bluff 2 (+6, +10 against people attracted to the Idol as per the Attractive feat), Concentration 5 (+6), Diplomacy 2 (+6, +10 against people attracted to the Idol as per the Attractive feat), Disguise 6 (+10), Intimidate 4 (+8) Knowledge (current events) 4 (+3), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+3), Notice 4 (+5), Perform (dance) 8 (+12), Perform (singing) 8 (+12), Sense Motive 5 (+6)

Feats: Attractive, Beautiful Voice[1] (singing), Benefit 2 (VIP access, wealth), Defensive Roll 2, Distract (Bluff), Dodge Focus 2, Endurance 2, Fascinate 2 (Diplomacy and Perform [singing]), Fearsome Presence 4, Inspire 4, Kawaii[1] (Perform [singing]), Skill Mastery (Disguise, Diplomacy, Perform [dance], Perform [singing]), Uncanny Dodge (hearing), Well-Known[1]

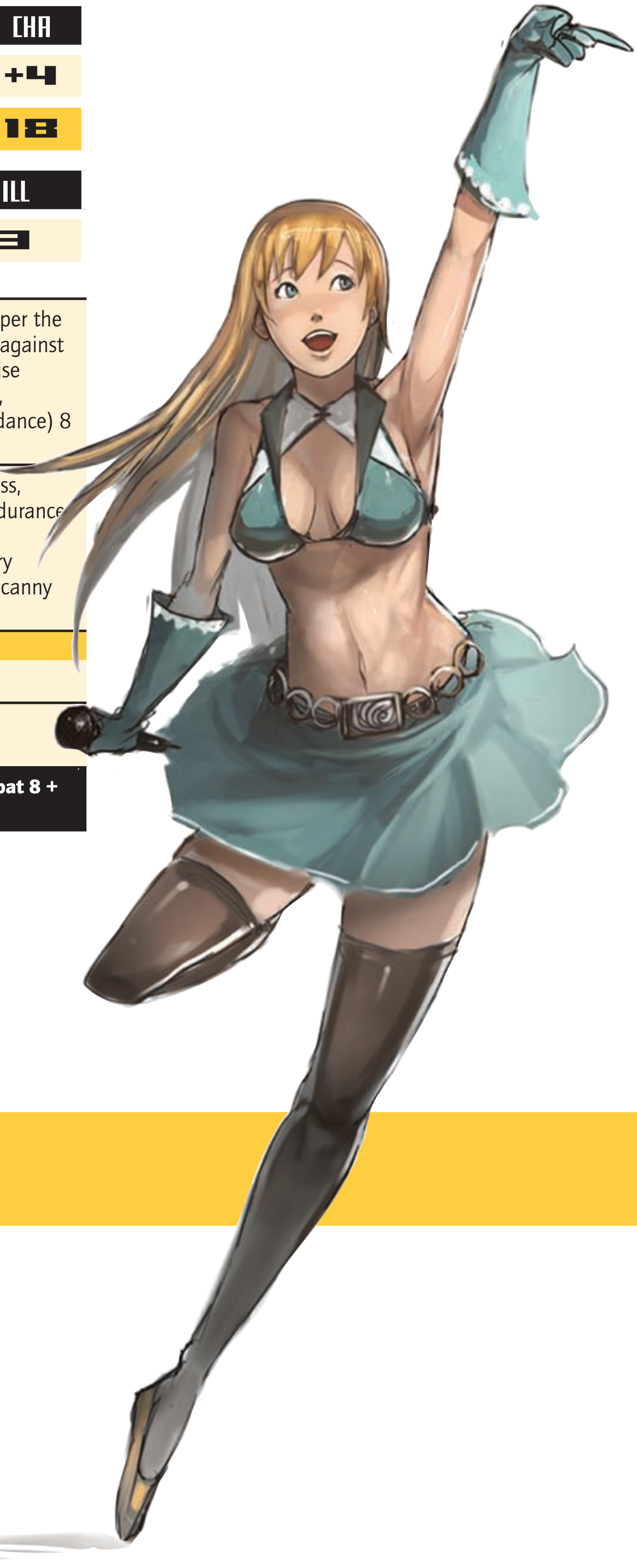
POWERS

Emotion Control 5 (Hearing-Dependent)

Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +1, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+1 flat-footed), Knockback -0, Initiative +2

Abilities 14 + Skills 13 (52 ranks) + Feats 25 + Powers 5 + Combat 8 + Saves 10 = 75

'THANK YOU ALL! I LOVE YOU!"



MAGICAL GIRL — POWER LEVEL 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+5/+2	+2/+0	+2	+1	+5/+3
9	20/15	14/10	15	13	20/16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+4/+2**	+5/+3*	+10/+5*	+11

*in normal identity, ** flat-footed, +0 in normal identity, [1] Trait described in this book

"I SHALL PUNISH YOU IN THE NAME OF... WHAT WAS IT?"



Skills: Bluff 10 (+15/+13*), Computers 2 (+4), Concentration 7 (+8), Diplomacy 7 (+12/+10*), Disguise 5 (+10/+8*), Escape Artist 6 (+11/+8*), Intimidate 7 (+12/+10*), Knowledge (current events) 8 (+10), Knowledge (history) 10 (+12), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+6), Languages (choose two), Notice 8 (+9), Sense Motive 11 (+12), Stealth 5 (+10/+7*)

Feats: Attack Focus 5 (ranged), Attack Specialization (Scepter Blast), Deep Ties[1] 2 (one family member and one best friend), Defensive Roll 2, Demonic Glare[1] 2, Equipment, Inspire 2, Kawaii (Bluff), Slap Silly 8[1], Uncanny Dodge (hearing)

Equipment: Bicycle (Strength 15, Speed 1, Toughness 5) with saddlebag, school uniform, reinforced school bag, cell phone, antique pen collection.

POWERS

Device 7 (easy to lose, Restricted to the mortal descendants of the Muses)
Enhanced Charisma 4
Enhanced Constitution 4
Enhanced Dexterity 5
Enhanced Reflex 2
Magic 6 (**Light of Truth 6**; *Alternate Powers:* **Comprehend 6** [speak and understand all languages, machines, and objects], **Super-Senses 4** [postcognition])
Morph 2 (any magical girl costume)
Shield 7
Scepter of Lore: **Blast 9** (stream of words hit the target; Affects Insubstantial; Linked [Stun]), **Illusion 1** (from her favorite books affecting all senses; Progression 1), **Leaping 1**, **Stun 5** (Range [Ranged], Linked [Blast]; Dazed only)

Combat: Attack +3, +8 (ranged), +10 (Scepter Blast), Grapple +2, Damage -1 (unarmed), +9 (Scepter blast), Defense +10 (+2 flat-footed, +3 in normal identity, +2 flat-footed in normal identity), Knockback -4 (-2 flat-footed or normal identity, -0 flat-footed and normal identity), Initiative +5/+2

Drawbacks: Normal Identity (takes a full action to incant and perform her transformation sequence, must have her Device in its scepter form, which also transforms from its antique fountain pen appearance, -4 points)

Abilities 18 + Skills 23 (92 ranks) + Feats 25 + Powers 60 + Combat 12 + Saves 16 - Drawbacks 4 = 150

MODERN SORCERER POWER LEVEL 6

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+0	+1	+3	+2	+2
8	10	12	17	15	15

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+1*	+6	+5	+10

*without ring, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Concentration 8 (+10), Diplomacy 3 (+5), Knowledge (arcane lore) 10 (+13), Knowledge (current events) 2 (+5), Notice 5 (+7), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Attack Specialization 2 (broom blast), Benefit (free access to a magical academy and its resources), Eidetic Memory, Ritualist

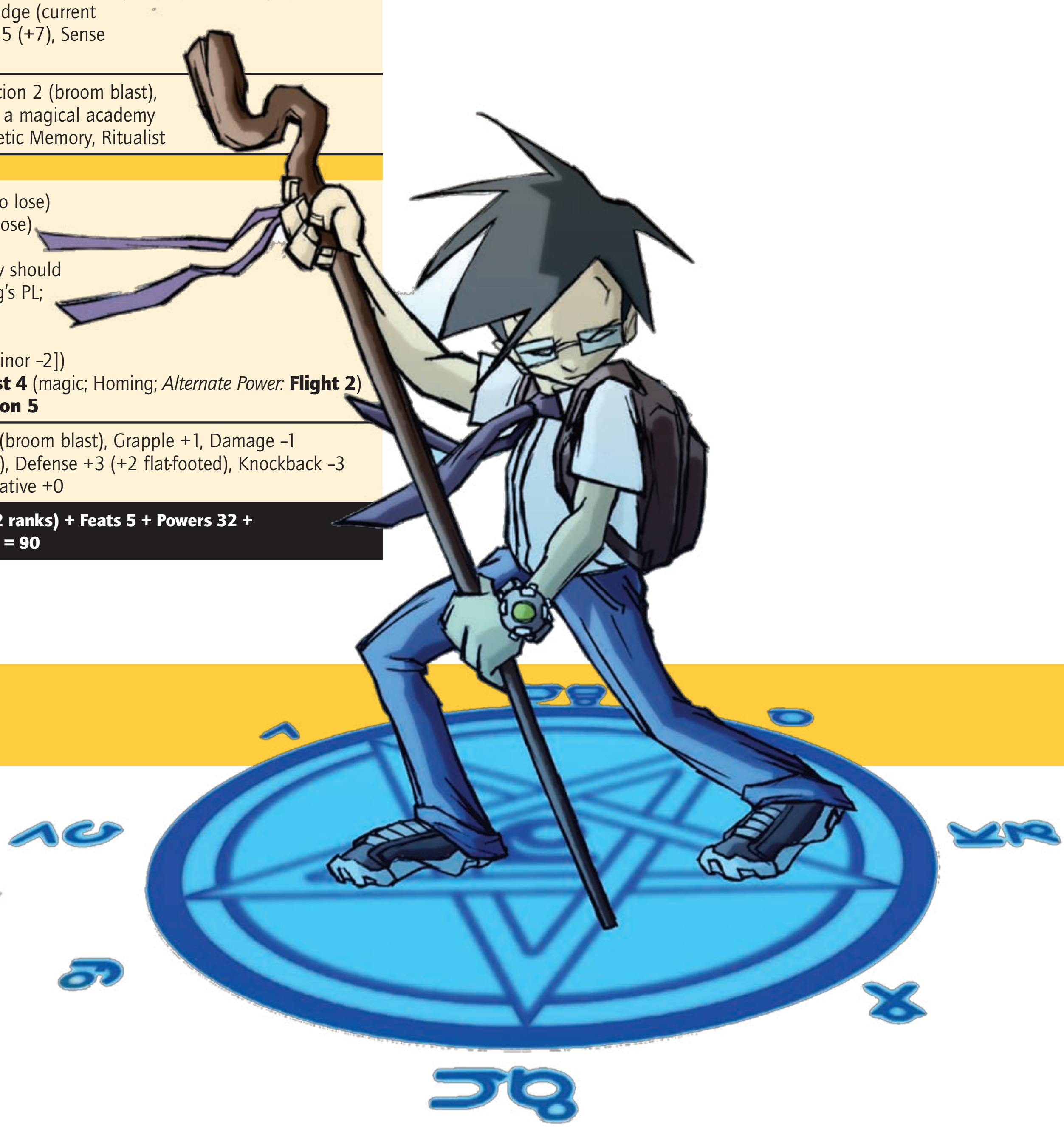
POWERS

Device 2 (broom, easy to lose)
Device 1 (ring, hard to lose)
Magic 11 (choose three power feats; they should not go over the setting's PL; Power Loss [must chant and gesture to do magic, common, minor –2])
B-16 Combat Broom: **Blast 4** (magic; Homing; *Alternate Power:* **Flight 2**)
Ring of Health: **Protection 5**

Combat: Attack +2, +6 (broom blast), Grapple +1, Damage –1 (unarmed), +4 (broom), Defense +3 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback –3 (–0 without ring), Initiative +0

Abilities 17 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 5 + Powers 32 + Combat 10 + Saves 18 = 90

"SORRY, CAN'T. PHONE LINES INTERFERE WITH SUMMONING SPELLS."



PRIEST POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+0	+3	+1	+3	+2
12	10	16	12	16	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+3	+8	+2	+10

[1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Concentration 5 (+8), Craft (structural) 7 (+8), Diplomacy 6 (+8), Knowledge (arcane lore) 11 (+12), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8 (+9), Medicine 5 (+8), Notice 5 (+8), Sense Motive 9 (+12)

Feats: Attack Focus (ranged) 4, Inspire 3, Leadership, Luck 3, Power Proxy[1], Ritualist, Teamwork 3

Powers
Deflect 5 (all ranged attacks; Ranged 2 ranks only; Power Loss*)
Expel (Creature) [1] **3** (choose a creature type; Progression 2 to cover an area of 25 ft.; Power Loss*)
Healing 3 (Total; Power Loss*)
Nullify 4 (all powers; Power Loss*)
* *Power Loss* = lose all powers from falling out of favor with religious allegiance, uncommon, minor, -1

Combat: Attack +3 (melee), +7 (ranged), Grapple +4, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback -1, Initiative +0

Abilities 20 + Skills 14 (56 ranks) + Feats 16 + Powers 42 + Combat 14 + Saves 14 = 120



"MAY YOU FIND YOUR WAY."

STUDENT POWER LEVEL 4

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+0	+1	+1	+0	+1
10	10	12	12	10	12

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+1	+4	+5	+5

[1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Computers 5 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Drive 4 (+4), Gather Information 6 (+7), Knowledge (distribute 8 ranks), Notice 6 (+6), Search 5 (+6), Stealth 4 (+4), Swim 2 (+2)

Feats: Beginner's Luck, Contacts, Elusive Target, Equipment, Fake Expert[1], Favored Environment 2 (urban city, inside any academic building), Improved Defense 2, Low Profile[1], Quick Change, Teamwork 2, Well-Informed

Equipment: Assorted useful magazines (+2 to any Knowledge check), bicycle (Strength 15, Speed 1, Toughness 5), cell phone, schoolbag

POWERS

Super-Senses 3 (detect by sight things out of the ordinary)

Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +2, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback -0, Initiative +0

Abilities 6 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 14 + Powers 3 + Combat 12 + Saves 13 = 60

'WILL YOU PLEASE LET ME GET TO CLASS? I'M LATE ALREADY!"



TECHIE/ARTIFICER POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+0	+2	+4	+1	-1
12	10	15	18	12	9

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+2	+10	+4	+10/+5*

* without Mind Shield, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Computers 10 (+14), Craft (electronic) 13 (+17), Craft (mechanical) 13 (+17), Craft (structural) 13 (+17), Disable Device 10 (+14), Drive 8 (+8), Knowledge (physical Sciences) 8 (+12), Knowledge (technology or arcane lore) 8 (+12), Pilot 6 (+6), Search 6 (+10), Sleight of Hand 5 (+5)

Feats: Attack Specialization (a specific combat Device), Eidetic Memory, Equipment 3, Evasion 2, Improvised Tools, Inventor (or Artificer), Luck, Master Plan, Mechanical Genius[1] (choose one technology type), Minions 3 (artificial minion with 15 power points), Skill Mastery (Craft [electronic], Craft [mechanical], Craft [structural], Knowledge [technology])

Equipment: 15 equipment points worth of items.

POWERS

Device 7 (hard to lose)
Mind Shield 5
Quickness 2
Device: You have 35 power points to assemble one or more Devices appropriate for the series

Combat: Attack +2, +4 (with a combat Device), Grapple +3, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback -1, Initiative +0

Abilities 16 + Skills 25 (100 ranks) + Feats 16 + Powers 35 + Combat 12 + Saves 16 = 120

"I SEE! THE PLASMA FLUX WAS LEAKING!"



TROUBLESHOOTER POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+1	+2	+1	+2	+1
15	13	14	12	14	12

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+7/+5*	+7	+8	+7

*flat-footed, 3 less without armor, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 10 (+11), Bluff 5 (+6), Climb 5 (+7), Computers 3 (+4), Disable Device 8 (+9), Disguise 4 (+5), Drive 7 (+8) (or Pilot or Ride), Escape Artist 5 (+6), Gather Information 4 (+5), Knowledge (choose any) 6 (+7), Notice 6 (+8), Search 5 (+6), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 8 (+9), Survival 4 (+6)

Feats: Beginner's Luck, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 4, Evasion 2, Favored Opponent (choose one), Fearless, Improved Initiative, Improvised Tools, Jack-of-All-Trades, Luck, Move-by Action, Quick Draw (draw), Redirect, Uncanny Dodge (sight)

Equipment: Sharp sword (+3, critical 18-20) or light pistol (+3, range increment 30 ft.), ring-mail undercoat (+3 Toughness, Subtle) or undercover vest (+3 Toughness, Subtle); 10 more equipment points worth of equipment

POWERS

Luck Control 2 (choose two options)
Nemesis 1
Super-Movement 2 (perfect balance[1], slow fall)
Super-Senses 1 (danger sense)

Combat: Attack +6, Grapple +8, Damage +2 (unarmed), +5 (sword) or +3 (light pistol), Defense +7 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +5

Drawbacks: Recurring Nightmares[1] (pick a tragic event in the Troubleshooter's past; d20 roll DC 15 each night for a chance to have a nightmare, –2 points)

Abilities 20 + Skills 21 (84 ranks) + Feats 19 + Powers 19 + Combat 26 + Saves 17 – Drawbacks 2 = 120

"I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT. FOR THE USUAL FEE."



WARRIOR POWER LEVEL 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+2	+1	+1	-1
15	16	14	12	13	9

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+8/5*	+7	+10	+5

*flat footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+9), Drive 4 (+7), Escape Artist 6 (+9), Intimidate 8 (+7), Knowledge (streetwise) 5 (+6), Notice 8 (+9), Sense Motive 7 (+8)

Feats: Ambidexterity, All-out Attack, Assessment, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 3, Elusive Target, Equipment 4, Improved Aim, Improved Initiative 3, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Quick Draw 2, Redirect, Startle, Sword Flurry[1] 4 (interval 2, max. bonus damage +10), Takedown Attack 2, Up the Wall[1], Weapon Bind

Equipment: Heavy pistol, reinforced leather trenchcoat (Toughness +3), motorcycle

POWERS

Deflect 8 (all ranged attacks; Action +2 (Free), Ranged; Limited [with sword only, only deflect attacks against others])
Device 2 (Bonecrusher sword, easy to lose)
Leaping 1
Teleport 2 (Change Direction)
Bonecrusher: Very, very large sword; **Strike 8** (Mighty; *Alternate Power:* **Trip 9** [Knockback; Range [Touch]]).

Combat: Attack +10, Grapple +12, Damage +2 (unarmed), +8 (sword) +4 (pistol), Defense +10 (+4 flat-footed), Knockback -3, Initiative +15

Abilities 19 + Skills 11 (44 ranks) + Feats 34 + Powers 36 + Combat 34 + Saves 16 = 150

"OH, THIS IS FUN!"



and an unsuspecting leader during hard times, because she has the power to inspire and keep dreams alive through her music.

- ***Examples:*** *Lynn Minmay, "Sharon Apple," Mylene Flare Jenius, and Sheryl from different series of the* Macross *saga, Mima Kirigoe from* Perfect Blue, *Lacus Clyne from* Mobile Suit Gundam Seed.

MAGICAL GIRL

Young girls shouldn't trust odd talking animals who give them an ancient artifact for safe-keeping, for it will surely open the door to becoming a warrior for truth, peace, and assorted goodness. The magical girl depends on her magical item to unlock her powers, she depends on her magical pet to teach her how to use them, and she often has no time for more than a crash course because the threats to the people she loves are not waiting.

- ***Examples:*** *Sailor Moon from* Sailor Moon, *Sakura from* Cardcaptor Sakura, *Miho from* Fancy Lala.

MODERN SORCERER

Magic and technology have always been uncomfortable siblings, and the modern sorcerer's choice of the former puts him in a unique situation in a world dominated by technological progress. His ancient arts are sometimes at odds with society, and then he must hide them. Other times, they are just an accepted part of human knowledge, and he is considered one of those rare professionals in an obscure field of work.

- ***Examples:*** *Negi Springfield from* Negima!, *Yume Kikuchi from* Someday's Dreamers, *Kiki from* Kiki's Delivery Service.

PRIEST

Faith has its privileges, and some of them are supernatural powers. A priest can follow any religion or philosophical path; the important thing is that his faith is strong enough to channel the power of spirits and gods. A priest is most often a spiritual advisor and a healer, but those who follow more proactive divinities are veritable combat powerhouses whose might is feared by all creatures of evil.

- ***Examples:*** *Eto and Greevus from* Record of Lodoss Wars, *Rei Hino from* Sailor Moon, *Miroku from* Inu-Yasha.

STUDENT

The worst crisis the ordinary student has to face is something like missing homework, having to organize her classroom's participation in the school's cultural festival, bumping onto her crush after school, or cramming for her college entrance exams. Life is not always so simple, and a student can get involved in extraordinary events, from developing her artistic or athletic talents into a career to aiding detectives and exorcists at their jobs to being sucked into an alternate world.

- ***Examples:*** *Koyuki from* BECK: Mongolian Chop Squad, *Hiyono Yuizaki from* Spiral, *Yamato Akitsuki from* Suzuka.

TECHIE/ARTIFICER

Somebody has to fix the mecha that pilots trash, and secret information doesn't grow on trees. It's the techie's job to handle both. Either a master mechanic and inventor or a skilled hacker and programmer, the techie supports heroes or is a hero herself. She understands the technology of the times, and she makes it her plaything. She's not so much a gadgeteer as she is a Miss Fix-It, keeping everything together when her friends insist on breaking it down with their dangerous antics.

- ***Examples:*** *Nene Romanova from* Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040, *Maya Ibuki from* Neon Genesis Evangelion, *Makoto Mizuhara from* El-Hazard: The Magnificent World.

TROUBLESHOOTER

Problems need solutions, and when traditional answers are insufficient, people call a troubleshooter. Going by many names, the job of the troubleshooter is to solve the previously unsolvable. He can be a detective, an explorer, a bounty hunter, a freelance spy, a courier, or any other similar profession. He can have extraordinary powers or be armed just with his wits and sheer cool. Whatever the means, the troubleshooter will get the job done.

- ***Examples:*** *Ban Midou and Ginji Amano from GetBackers, Spike Spiegel from Cowboy Bebop, Rally Vincent from Riding Bean and Gunsmith Cats.*

WARRIOR

A warrior excels in combat, pure and simple. Whether she is a wandering samurai or a rogue gunslinger, the warrior knows how to squeeze the most out of her fighting style and weapons, dancing with devastating grace through her enemies' attacks. There is nothing supernatural about the warrior's skills; it all comes from talent, dedication, and a few pounds of good steel.

- ***Examples:*** *Guts from Berserk, Jo from Burst Angel, Mugen from Samurai Champloo.*

SKILLS

Manga heroes have a strange relationship with skills; extraordinarily gifted people walk side by side with phenomenally incompetent idiots. Even many of the talented heroes have some very large gaps in their expertise. A hero who can actually cook is a rarity.

The *Mastermind's Manual* already presents many interesting alternatives to the skills system, and some of them are particularly appropriate for a *Mecha & Manga* series. In this section, you will also find additional ways in which you can use skills to further give your session a manga and anime flavor.

Note that all of the options in this section are just that, *optional*. Discuss with your gaming group which of them you would like to implement, and write down any changes you make to the core skill system so that, when doubts arise, you have something to fall back on. This is particularly important when creating new options on which players may spend power points.

SKILLS AS UNORTHODOX COMBAT TRAITS

Many manga stories will not have straight combat as the main method for conflict resolution, but their heroes still need a way to determine who comes out victorious from a head-on encounter, regardless of its nature.

Just like the attack bonus is an offensive trait and the defense bonus a protective one, skills can fill those niches in different types of conflicts. For example, in a battle of wits during a formal dinner party, a villain can use his Bluff skill as a means to attack the hero's confidence and good standing, which the hero tries to avoid with either her Sense Motive or Diplomacy skills, and she resists any "social damage" inflicted with a Will save.

UNFAMILIAR TECHNOLOGY

The Craft skill assumes that the hero is familiar with the technology he's working with. However, in some settings, technologies of disparate conceptual basis can coexist. For instance, a medieval fantasy setting may have elven technology based on magic at a TL 3, while humans are still stuck at TL 2 and working with ordinary materials, or humans may be trying to work on captured alien technology to build mecha in preparation for a galactic war. In a more "realistic" setting, you could also apply unfamiliarity to the case of an alternate era Cold War pilot from the United States trying to operate a stolen Soviet giant robot.

When a hero works with unfamiliar technology (such as a Bronze Age smith faced with a Toledo steel sword or a modern computer engineer figuring out an alien crystal-based database), all Craft, Knowledge, and Profession checks suffer a –4 penalty, as if the hero was working without tools. In this case, the missing tool is basic familiarity with the technology.

See **Chapter 6: Gamemastering** for a full explanation of non-combat conflicts and how to use skills as unorthodox combat traits.

AUTOMATIC SKILLS

There are things that people in any given setting are supposed to know or be able to do off-hand. This can include using computers in a high-tech future or swimming in a world made up of islands. The heroes' backgrounds can even demand that they know certain things: a series about mecha pilots will not last very long if its heroes can't at least make their mecha walk forward. There are two ways to deal with this.

- **Common Tasks:** Based on the setting, tone, and flavor of the series, the Gamemaster can decide that certain tasks that would normally require a skill check simply work. In a cyberpunk series, for example, everybody would know how to operate the holographic interface of an information booth, so unless a character grew up in a primitive environment, searching for simple information in a public info console does not ask for a Computers check. Using the console to divert access through a hacked password certainly would, however.
- **Automatic Ranks:** If it's only the heroes who are supposed to have some indispensible basic training, but it's not a societal standard in the setting, the Gamemaster can decide that all heroes must have a minimum number of ranks in a particular area. These ranks can be free of charge, or the players may be required to pay for them with power points during character creation. For example, if a series will focus around the adventures of a mecha pilot squad, all heroes should have at least 4 ranks in Pilot. If the story is instead about the whole crew of a mecha carrier starship, then characters are free to learn whatever skills would best serve their concept.

SETTING SPECIALTIES

Craft, Knowledge, Perform, and Profession are specialty skills, because they divide into several specific fields within those skills. The different specialties listed in *Mutants & Masterminds* represent the fields of practice that exist in a modern-day, light-fantasy setting that mirrors the world of superhero comics, but a manga setting can wildly deviate from that. You will need to come up with different specialties that better represent what heroes in that setting are able to learn.

In a way, this basically creates new skills or new uses for existing skills but tailored specifically to give flavor to the manga setting.

CRAFT

Craft is used to create things, so Craft specialties depend on the setting to determine what people using normal tools can normally create (or at least whatever passes for normal within the setting). The specialties given in *Mutants & Masterminds* are fairly broad, and strange crafts can be incorporated in them to avoid creating unnecessary specialties. If a particular craft suggested inside a specialty is incredibly important for the setting, feel free to make it its own specialty, such as creating Craft (alchemy) out of the alchemical craft possible with Craft (chemical) in a setting about state-sponsored alchemists. Existing and new crafts can include:

- **Artistic:** Calligraphy, holographic sculpting, dreamshaping, tattooing, fleshcraft, etc.
- **Chemical:** Potions, alchemy, geneshaping, flesh golems, magical ink, spirit offerings, biotechnology, custom organisms, medicines and diseases, etc.
- **Cooking:** An amazingly rare skill that would belong to Craft (chemical) or Profession (cook) if it wasn't such a big deal for a manga hero to know how to prepare a meal, as otherwise very talented characters are famous for being terrible cooks to the point of toxicity.
- **Electronic, Mechanical:** These specialties are very straightforward and carry across all kinds of settings, but the types of devices a hero can build depends on the setting's Tech Level. A character with top ranks in Craft (mechanical) can build a mecha in a sci-fi setting but may be limited to steam locomotives in a steampunk story, or even simple string-and-twigs traps at a primitive Tech Level. "Electronics" should be interpreted as any device that can carry energy impulses to perform certain functions, which means that in a setting where magic is the new science, an "electronic" circuit can actually be a gold-plated card with acid-etched magical symbols.
- **Expressive:** Novels, music and lyrics, theatre plays, interactive CGI art, TV and movie scripts, golem "programming," dream manipulation, virtual avatar design, etc.
- **Mystical:** Magic circles, psychic constructs, chi healing, golems and magical automatons, talismans, prayer strips, warding and good luck charms, etc. If you include this Craft specialty, you can use it instead of Knowledge (arcane lore) for the construction check of a magical ritual.
- **Structural:** Another simple specialty that not only depends on the setting's Tech Level but also the materials available in it. Valid materials in certain settings include insect-produced chitin, trees grown into a desired shape, necromantic bone-crafting, psychic energy, virtual data, and crystal tuning.
- **Weapon- & Armorsmithing:** In low-technology settings, being able to craft weapons and armor is too important to be left as a generality inside Craft (mechanical) or Craft (structural). Even in modern Japan, swordsmiths labor with exquisite artistry to forge the famous katana, still some of the finest blades in existence, whose blades can withstand a few seconds of machine gun barrage. In a high-technology setting, a mechanic who can build a railgun is just as valued.

Some of the examples overlap in purpose. A setting can interpret any Craft specialty in many different ways, and it's up to you and the rest of the players to define the areas of expertise available in the story you're gearing up to play.

Note that truly extraordinary Craft capabilities, primarily creating highly useful and effective equipment quickly in the midst of the action, should require at least the Inventor feat or its equivalent, and may even be better handled as a power, such as Gadgets from *Ultimate Power* (page 159).

CRAFT DIFFICULTY

The Gamemaster is the final judge of whether a particular item is simple (DC 15), moderate (DC 20), complex (DC 25), or advanced (DC 30) to create, taking into account factors like Tech Level, power level, and setting elements. A simple sword can have a moderate DC in a medieval setting, but a complex one in a modern one or the other way around. As a rule of thumb, increase the DC by one level for every Tech Level (as described in this book) of difference between the setting and the item.

KNOWLEDGE

The Knowledge specialties in *Mutants & Masterminds* cover most areas of study, and you only need to figure out where the stranger elements of the setting belong. You can add or merge specialties, but it's advisable to keep the Knowledge specialty list as concise as possible, to avoid forcing players to dilute their power points in learning skills that might be included in others. Some suggested specialties that don't already appear in *Mutants & Masterminds* are:

- **Architecture and Engineering:** Knowledge of building techniques, names of architects and engineers, principles of construction, fortress design, and logistics, and a smattering of siege warfare. These could be included in Knowledge (technology).
- **Cosmology:** Heavenly and infernal realms (i.e. Tengoku, Soul Society, Mount Han, etc.), supernatural kingdoms, important personages in supernatural hierarchies. These could be part of Knowledge (arcane lore).
- **Cyberculture:** Protocol and etiquette of online communities, important servers and sites, online forums, famous hackers and programmers, net celebrities, popular memes, etc. This is like Knowledge (streetwise) or Knowledge (popular culture) but applies to user-dominated cyberrealms.
- **Local:** Knowledge of things pertaining to a constrained zone, such as a large city or a province, including facts like general layout, important people, available goods and services, etc. There are many Knowledge (local) skills, each of them pertaining to a different zone. This might be part of Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (streetwise), but it could apply to many more Knowledge specialties, only limited to a particular zone.
- **Martial Arts:** Kung fu styles, dojos, etiquette between martial artists, famous practitioners, secret techniques, brotherhoods of the martial arts world, etc. This could be part of Knowledge (arcane lore), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (tactics), or even Knowledge (streetwise).
- **Nobility and Royalty:** Lineages, heraldry, family trees, mottoes, personalities. This could be part of Knowledge (civics).
- **Parapsychological Sciences:** In a setting where psychic powers are studied and developed as a science, this is the field that covers the knowledge of powerful psychics, theory of psychic and psionic powers, medical research, etc. This specialty can be included in or replace Knowledge (arcane lore).
- **Otherworlds:** If the character is able to study parallel or alternate worlds, planes of existence, or mirror realities, he uses the Knowledge (otherworlds) skill to know about their composition and basic rules. This can be part of Knowledge (arcane lore), but in series where there are parallel worlds, people are normally clueless.
- **Pet Monsters:** Creatures bred for the purpose of dueling, their powers, trainers, tournaments, etc. This can be part of Knowledge (arcane lore), Knowledge (life sciences), or Knowledge (technology), depending on the nature of the pet monsters.
- **Police Sciences:** Ballistics, criminology, forensics, SWAT tactics, etc. This can be part of Knowledge (technology), Knowledge (civics), or Knowledge (tactics).

PERFORM

The only thing that you need to determine regarding Perform specialties is the form they take in the setting. Performance art is very specific to culture and history, and a hero trying to execute an art form that he's not familiar with suffers a –4 penalty to his checks, as if working with unfamiliar technology (see sidebar).

> ***Examples:*** *An idol singer trying to emulate the invading aliens' ritual chanting to prevent a battle from erupting, a Western lute player trying to perform with a Japanese shamizen.*

PROFESSION

The occupations available in a given setting depend wholly on the Tech Level, because different progress spawns different fields of expertise. Professions from earlier TLs can survive in later times with some adaptations. Aside from the traditional professions like doctor, waiter (a popular part-time job for many students), or reporter, manga settings can include more exotic careers with which characters may earn a living:

- **TL 1:** Diviner, exorcist, farmer, hunter, ninja, noble, merchant, priest, shepherd, warrior, witch, wizard, wuxia.
- **TL 2:** Academic, adventurer, artist, bounty hunter, consulting detective, career criminal, inventor, doctor, scientist, gentleman (or lady) thief.
- **TL 3:** Ace driver/pilot, athlete, businessman, gun fu master, heir, idol, magical girl, mission control operator, soldier, student, technician.
- **TL 4:** Cyborg surgeon, hacker, information broker, mecha pilot, outcast, EVA techie (Extra-Vehicular Activity, mostly in space).
- **TL 5:** Colonist, hyperspace navigator, scavenger, terraformer, transporter.

SKILLS AS POWERS

In Chinese, the word "kung fu" means "great effort," and it applies to *all* kinds of efforts, not only martial arts. Under this assumption, the skills of a superbly accomplished hero should resemble powers, such as the very typical knack that manga and anime heroes have for very high jumps.

To make skill use into something extraordinary, you can use feats and powers like Leaping (for the aforementioned high jumps), Super-Senses (to empower the Notice skill), Fascinate (to grant a special ability to an interaction skill), and Well-Informed (to use Gather Information in special ways.)

Alternatively, the setting might simply dictate that skills don't need powers or feats to make them extraordinary; having a lot of ranks is the only thing a hero needs to have an excellent kung fu.

To include extraordinary skills in your series, you have four options you can use separately or together, increase rank limits, reduce skill tasks' DCs, introduce more skill feats, or allow for automatic successes.

RANK LIMITS

The series' power level limits the number of ranks any skill can have to power level +5. In a setting where skills can be used for extraordinary effects, this limit might be much higher or simply not exist. As a general rule, every 4 ranks above the setting's normal power level represent an additional level of expertise that heroes can reach with their skills, considering that 15 ranks represent mastery under normal circumstances.

REDUCED DC

For heroes, the difficulty of certain tasks can be reduced so that their existing skill bonus packs more punch for the same ranks. You can either make this a standard part of the setting for all characters or just for heroic characters, or require that the player spend a power point to mark any particular

skill as extraordinary and reduce all DCs for that skill by 4. This would effectively mean the player purchased a power feat for the skill.

SKILL FEATS

Mutants & Masterminds already includes a number of skill feats that expand the uses of certain skills. Depending on your setting, you can create more of these. A skill feat should have one of the following effects:

- a) Add a single special ability to a skill. This is like Fascinate, which adds the ability to mesmerize to a single interaction skill, or Track, which gives Survival the ability to follow a target's trail. If the ability affects a target, a saving throw is called for, depending on the ability's nature, and its DC should be equal to the skill check result. A skill feat could instead remove a limitation from the skill to which it applies, like the need for tools in Craft checks, thanks to Improvised Tools.
- b) Give twice the benefit of spending a power point to purchase skill ranks, limited to a particular task or circumstance. This means a +8 bonus to a task that involves a single skill, a +4 bonus to a task that can be accomplished with two skills, a +2 bonus affecting a common task for four skills, or a +1 bonus to eight or more skills. This is like Attractive, which grants a +4 bonus to two skills (Bluff and Diplomacy) in a single circumstance (target finds the hero attractive), and Endurance, which grants a +4 bonus to Swim and Constitution checks/Fortitude saves for certain actions (tasks which involve physical strain).
- c) Allow for using a skill in place of another for a particular task. The substitution must make sense under the setting's logic. This is like Startle, which allows a hero to use Intimidate rather than Bluff for the purpose of feinting in combat.
- d) Change a skill's key ability wholesale or for particular tasks, such as adding the Strength modifier instead of Dexterity to Acrobatics checks for jumping. This is particularly advantageous when the ability replacing the original is Enhanced.

You can find some examples of manga-themed skill feats in the next section of this chapter.

AUTOMATIC MASTERY

Heroes with enough ranks in a skill can perform some tasks with their eyes closed and a hand tied behind their backs. You can declare that all heroes have the Skill Mastery feat for all their skills or that a single application of Skill Mastery affects all skills rather than the usual four the player must choose when purchasing the feat.

TASK SPECIALIZATION

A manga hero might be a wonderful programmer but not know how to hack into a database very well, or he might navigate out of the thickest jungle but be utterly lost in a mountain. To represent these focused applications of skills, the Gamemaster can allow a skill rank to provide a +2 rather than a +1 bonus when devoted to a particular task with that skill. Because this method creates a lot of bookkeeping for players and Gamemaster alike, you can instead introduce the Task Focus feat from the next section.

PRACTICING FOR A FINAL TASK

A manga story often allows its protagonists to prepare for a great task ahead of them, be it a college entrance exam, a music band gig, hacking into a complex cyberbrain structure, or performing a dangerous magic ritual.

By engaging in a montage scene, the heroes prepare for such important events. This event must be a type of challenge achieved through skill checks, not any type of combat. All heroes must participate in the scene, which consists of a sequence of short takes depicting them going about their preparations (studying, rehearsing, gathering intelligence, purchasing quality ingredients, and so forth).

A preparation check is an ability or skill check, and the Gamemaster decides which particular ability or check the preparation needs, as well as the number, DCs, and duration of such checks. Each check will give a +2 bonus to the hero that will participate in the final event, as she is effectively performing the aid action for herself, ahead of time. Each successful preparation check only gives the +2 bonus for a single skill check during the final event, so if the event requires more than one check, the hero must prepare more if she wants the bonus to apply to the greatest number of skill checks possible.

If the heroes engage in a distracting event between their practice and the final task they practiced for, all the bonuses gained are lost. A distracting event is one where the hero wants to accomplish something, and the way to go about it requires a die roll to adjudicate the result. The hero may forego attempting anything that would require a roll, but she then leaves her fate in the GM's hands. A hero can make die rolls as a reaction to events happening around and suffer no consequence to her preparation, such as making a Notice check to hear the out-of-control car careening towards her.

> ***Example:*** *In the year 2085, Mayu is a student preparing for her entrance exam for the prestigious Tokyo University, where she wants to become a mecha engineer. The Gamemaster wants to make the entrance exam into a complex event requiring several Knowledge (technology) checks, and he decides that Mayu needs to make Intelligence checks in order to cram all the exam information she needs. He doesn't tell Mayu's player how many Knowledge checks the exam will require, and the player decides Mayu will study for five nights before the scheduled date. The Gamemaster sets a DC 15 for the complex information, and each Intelligence check represents a night of study. Mayu's player rolls 3 successes out of the possible 5, and thus she enjoys a +2 bonus for three of the Knowledge (technology) checks the exam requires. The Gamemaster or the player describes what Mayu does during those five days in which she studies.*
>
> *Hiro, Mayu's crush, invites her on a date on the day before the exam, and she accepts. If she just sits back and enjoys the date as it happens, the information (and corresponding bonuses) remains fresh in her mind, although nothing of particular note will happen. If she actively flirts to make Hiro like her more (making Diplomacy checks), the stress makes her forget some of the things she crammed, and she loses the bonus. She can still be smart enough to pass the exam, but she won't be enjoying the fruits of her hard work.*

FEATS

As much as skills help define the things that manga heroes can do, they cannot account for all of the special knacks that they enjoy from training, raw talent, special breeding, or even their life history. For those little quirks, characters have feats. This section includes the option for proficiency feats (from *Mastermind's Manual*) and features a number of feats based on the guidelines for powers as feats given in *Mastermind's Manual* and *Ultimate Power*. Thus, some feats (like Demonic Glare and Kawaii) border on the superhuman.

PROFICIENCY FEATS

A series where it's important to differentiate between trained and untrained use of equipment and Devices may require the inclusion of proficiency feats. Restricted equipment, such as heavy weapons, mecha, or sentient bioarmor may require a character to train in their use in order to make them work as they should.

This option works for settings with a more serious tone, where the existence of certain items does not mean just anybody can get their hands on them, let alone use them. The Gamemaster defines what equipment requires special proficiency. Using such equipment without the required proficiency imposes a –4 penalty on the kind of roll needed to use the equipment, such as –4 to attack rolls for weapons, –4 to Pilot checks for mecha, etc.

The effect of a proficiency feat is to remove the penalty for using the restricted item or group of similar items, if they are common enough in the setting. You will find examples of proficiency feats in the *Mastermind's Manual*; take them as a guideline, given the variety of equipment types that the strangest manga series can have. Some example of proficiency areas that a feat can cover are:

FEATS

FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
COMBAT FEATS	
(Attack) Flurry (+)	Take -2 and increase your damage by +1 for every 5 points above your target's Defense.
Break the Style (+)	Gain a bonus to Defense or Attack against a martial artist.
Combat Reaction (+)	Use a particular action as a reaction to a specific trigger.
Combo (Action) (+)	Gain a combo point with a successful combat action, to pay for the activation of a Combo power.
Slap Silly (+)	Interrupt a grapple attempt with a well-placed slap.
Withstand Damage	Reduce dodge bonus to increase Toughness bonus.
Zen Strike	Use your Wisdom instead of your Strength bonus for melee damage.
FORTUNE FEATS	
Deep Ties (+)	Gain extra hero points when faced with an emotionally important complication.
Perfect Timing	Arrive at the right place, at the right time.
GENERAL FEATS	
Benefit	Additional benefits include organizational ties, common sense, important family, normal appearance and standard features.
Bishonen/Bishoujo (+)	A successful interaction skill check improves the attitudes of others.
Distracting Looks (+)	Your looks give you a bonus or impose a penalty on people attracted to you.
Last Stand	Use extra effort to ignore all damage penalties for one round.
Low Profile (+)	Skill checks to gain info on you suffer a penalty.
Ninja Run (+)	Run for longer and ignore difficult terrain.
Power Proxy (+)	You are the point of origin of an ally's powers.
Salvage	Gain a bonus pool for Craft checks by cannibalizing existing machines.
Tech Familiarity	You are proficient with alien, arcane, or otherwise exotic technology.
Well-Known (+)	People you meet make an automatic Gather Information check to recognize you.
SKILL FEATS	
Beautiful Voice (+)	Use an interaction skill to stop a fight.
Conspiracy Theorist (+)	Make a free, unrelated skill check on a natural 20 in certain skill checks.
Demonic Glare (+)	Silence fools with a deadly staredown.
Fake Expert (+)	Fool reality itself into thinking you know what you're doing.
Interface (+)	+4 bonus to a skill that requires tools when you use them.
Kawaii (+)	You make your enemies shaken by your utter cuteness.
Mechanical Genius	+4 bonus to Craft and Disable Device checks with a chosen technology.
Online Research	Use Computers instead of Gather Information when looking for information.
Rhythm of Combat	You are aware of how combat is going for allies and foes.
Rousing Speech (+)	Use a specific interaction skill to give a bonus to an ally for one round.
Sense Murderous Intent	Use Sense Motive instead of Notice to pinpoint hostile targets.
Task Focus (+)	Add half your skill ranks as a bonus to a specific task.
Truth Sense	Make a free Sense Motive check when witnessing deception.
Up the Wall	Use Acrobatics instead of Climb to scale certain inclines.

- **Weapons:** Martial weapons (those that require more than swinging them around to deal their damage), a single group of similar exotic weapons (those with strange designs or unique characteristics), personal firearms (simple pistols and rifles), longarms (assault rifles, carbines, and other military-grade rifles), heavy weapons (machine guns, bazookas), vehicle-mounted weapons, mecha weapons, energy pistols (blasters, laser guns), advanced melee weapons (melee weapons with very strange properties), sentient symbiotic weapons, psychic weapons, etc.
- **Armor:** Light armor, medium armor, heavy armor, powersuits, exo-skeletons, symbiotic armor, etc.
- **Surface Vehicles:** Tanks, 18-wheelers, hovercraft, powerboats, sailboats, large cruisers, bipedal mecha, arachnid mecha, etc.
- **Aircraft:** Heavy planes, fighter craft, helicopters, mecha in flight-mode, etc.
- **Space Vehicles:** Shuttles, orbital landers, space fighters, space-mode mecha, large cruisers, etc.
- **Mecha:** All kinds of mecha, labor mecha, warfare mecha, ancient mecha, etc.
- **Professional Activities:** Surgery, AI-programming, crafting a particular type of magical or technological item (specific versions of the Inventor feat), cybernetic installation, etc.

FEATS

Manga heroes display some unique abilities that you can represent with some of the following feats. The Gamemaster can disallow any feat if it's inappropriate for the series.

(ATTACK) FLURRY — COMBAT, RANKED

Your fists, legs, or weapons move with lightning speed, overwhelming your target with a melee barrage. Choose one type of melee attack when acquiring this feat (unarmed, swords, staff, a particular Strike power, etc.). As a full action, you can launch multiple attacks at a target with the chosen attack form. Make a normal attack roll with a –2 modifier. For every 5 points by which you exceed your target's Defense, add +1 to your attack's damage bonus, up to +5. Each additional rank in this feat reduces the interval to apply the extra damage by one, to a minimum of 2, increases the maximum damage bonus to +10, or designates another form of melee combat. The bonus granted by (Attack) Flurry does not count against power level limits. You cannot use this feat with powers with the Action drawback or the Autofire extra.

BEAUTIFUL VOICE — SKILL, RANKED

Your voice has a soothing quality that puts others at ease. Choose Diplomacy or a vocal Perform skill when acquiring this feat. You are subject to the normal guidelines for interaction skills, but you can use this feat during combat. Take a standard action and make an interaction skill check against your target's opposing check (the same skill, Sense Motive, or Will save, whichever has the highest bonus). If you succeed, the target becomes amenable to talk things out rather than fight. Her attitude towards you doesn't change, but at least she will hear you out if neither you nor any of your allies perform any hostile actions that round. The GM decides whether the target does listen, but she may resume combat whenever she wishes or whenever any of your allies performs any hostile action, and she may not be affected by your voice again in this encounter. You may take this feat more than once. Each time, it applies to a different applicable skill. Like all interaction skills, you can use Beautiful Voice on a group, but you must affect everyone in the group equally.

BENEFIT — GENERAL

The following are more examples of benefits a manga hero can enjoy.

- **Organizational Ties:** The hero is an agent or employee of an organization with the funds and access to restricted technology, allowing the hero to purchase otherwise forbidden equipment.
- **Common Sense:** Usually, only one member of a series' entire cast has this benefit. The hero can make a Wisdom check to get a "bad feeling" when she or her allies are about to do something very, very wrong, as warned by the Gamemaster (DC 5-10 depending on the action's level of stupid).
- **Important Family:** You belong to a family with renown and influence (or your fiancée does). While this doesn't give you extra resources, people will be more inclined to deal with you based on your name alone.
- **Normal Appearance:** If you belong to a species that faces complications or drawbacks due to their physical appearance, this benefit can buy off one of them and make you look closer to what the setting considers "normal."
- **Standard Features:** Artificial heroes can have 5 equipment points worth of equipment installed into their bodies per rank, as part of their species' racial template.

BISHONEN/BISHOUJO — GENERAL, RANKED

You are an *extremely* attractive member of your chosen gender, stunning others with your looks. When you use an interaction skill against a character controlled by the GM, success brings said character's attitude towards you one step closer to Helpful, in addition to the normal effects of the interaction task you attempted (see **Diplomacy,** page 46 in *Mutants & Masterminds*), because she just feels good that such a good-looking person is talking to her. If you are using the Diplomacy skill precisely to improve NPCs' attitudes, a success would actually improve their attitude by two steps. Once you enjoy this effect, you cannot use it again during the same interaction with the same person. You can only affect a single target up to 10 feet away from you; with each additional rank, the range of this effect *and* the number of targets increase by one step on the **Time and Value Progression** table. The attitude gains from this feat are temporary. After a few minutes out of your sight, the target's or targets' attitudes return to normal (unless you successfully improved them with regular interaction).

BREAK THE STYLE — COMBAT, RANKED

You can adapt your fighting style to your opponent's. If you successfully use the Assessment feat on an opponent with the (Martial Arts) Stance power, you can make a Knowledge (martial arts or tactics) check (DC 10 + opponent's (Martial Arts) Stance ranks). If successful, you gain a bonus to either your Defense or your attack rolls equal to the number of ranks in this feat, chosen at the beginning of each round. You lose this bonus when your opponent changes to a different stance or drops his stance altogether. Your total Defense or attack bonus cannot exceed the setting's power level when you use this feat.

COMBAT REACTION — COMBAT, RANKED

You have trained to react quickly to particular surprises. Define a specific action that can be performed with a move or free action, and assign it to a particular event, such as "jump to cover when people start shooting," "use the Interpose feat on the nearest ally as soon as combat starts," or "become Invisible when I hear a strange noise." When the event you assigned comes to pass, you can perform the defined action as a reaction, before the event's results are adjudicated. Additional ranks let you choose another combination of action and event.

COMBO (ACTION) — COMBAT, RANKED

You can weave an attack into a complex sequence with devastating results. When you acquire this feat, choose a specific action you can make during combat. The designated action is considered a combo action. If the designated action is successful, you gain a certain number of combo points

you can use towards paying to activate a Combo Finish power (see **Powers** in the next section). Each rank in this feat allows you to select a different combo action. You can only assign this feat to actions that entail rolls against a target's Defense, opposed checks, or rolls that the target can resist with a successful save.

CONSPIRACY THEORIST — SKILL, RANKED

You are adept at reading between the lines and making connections between two apparently unrelated facts. This is not so much intuition as the ability to process and compare information on the fly. If you roll a natural 20 on any Gather Information, Investigate, or Knowledge check, you gain an insight that appears unrelated to the subject at hand. You can then make a new check for any one of the skills mentioned without needing to have any tools or reference material readily available. The subject of the second roll doesn't *need* to be related to the first one, so a hero could suddenly deduce the answer to a scientific problem that had been plaguing her for weeks after talking about the latest baseball game while searching local bars for information on weapon shipments. Each additional rank in this feat moves the die roll threshold that allows a second check by one, up to a natural roll of 16 to 20.

DEEP TIES — FORTUNE, RANKED

Your emotions run deep when it comes to a particular situation. Choose one of your complications. When you encounter the complication, it awards two hero points instead of one. If you don't use the extra hero point by the end of the encounter when you gained it, it is lost. A complication with Deep Ties is an integral part of the hero, and resolving it should be a major character plot point in any series. You can only take up to three ranks of this feat. Each rank allows you to choose a new complication.

DEMONIC GLARE — SKILL, RANKED

During social interaction, you have the option to express your anger and annoyance in subtle yet very effective ways. Choose a target, preferably one who just said or did something supremely stupid or insensitive. As a move action, you can make an Intimidate check against your target's Will save. If you win, in his mind, you're wreathed in hellfire and your eyes are giant, blank pits of white-hot flame (or choose your favorite imagery). You just have to *stare* at him (he must be able to see you), and he becomes unable to speak for that round. You can maintain the effect (requiring a move action each round). The effect ends when you stop. Each additional rank moves the number of targets you can affect one step up the **Time and Value Progression Table**. If combat begins, the effect ends. This feat works better in light-hearted or outright comedic series.

DISTRACTING LOOKS — GENERAL, RANKED

You may not have a charming personality or a cute appearance, but you have the physical assets that make people drool and stare in dumbstruck admiration. When meeting people for the first time who would normally be attracted to you, they must succeed at a Will save (DC 10 + rank + Charisma bonus, up to the PL's limits for save DCs) or become smitten. While smitten, your DCs for interaction skill checks against them are reduced by 2 per rank, or your targets suffer a –1 penalty to opposed skill checks or Will saving throws per rank, whichever applies. This condition lasts until they lose sight of you or a third party sways their attention away from you by doing something as simple as standing between you two or slapping her around. At that point, they regain their senses, but any effect you achieved through your interaction with them remains. This feat usually carries a complication: people who would *not* be attracted to you will generally despise you for stealing the spotlight.

FAKE EXPERT — SKILL, RANKED

You may have no idea what you're doing, but other people don't need to know that. Choose two skills upon gaining this feat. You can make a Bluff check instead of using the chosen skill to fool fate itself that you know what you're doing. For a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier, the check *seems* to work as intended (if successful); you plug the leak in the cooling pipes, you get the malfunctioning spaceship moving again, or you activate the ancient relic that only descendants of Lord Badass can use. Even if you fail, if your check beat the Sense Motive check of any onlooker, they are convinced that you tried your best but the problem was out of your ability. You don't actually achieve anything useful related to the skill you're faking; the information you gain is not true, you only buy time to hopefully get out of the situation or for a *real* expert to solve the problem. Once the duration ends, the real situation reasserts itself, sometimes with calamitous consequences. This is more useful when applied to specialty and interaction skills. You cannot make a second fake expertise roll for the same task, whether you succeed or fail—reality is on to you. Each additional rank allows you to choose two other skills to affect.

INTERFACE — SKILL, RANKED

You make tools an extension of your body and your will. Choose a skill that requires tools when you acquire this feat (this includes Drive and Pilot, which use vehicles as "tools," as well as Computers). You gain a +4 bonus to the skill check if you use tools to perform it, not limited by the setting's power level. This bonus stacks with any other bonus gained from using superior tools, but it does not apply if you do not use tools (such as with the Improvised Tools feat or the Datalink power). Each additional rank allows you to apply this effect to a different skill.

KAWAII — SKILL, RANKED

You are *so* cute it's unsettling. Choose Bluff, Diplomacy, or Perform when you acquire this feat. You are subject to the normal guidelines for interaction skills. Take a move action and make an interaction skill check against your target's Will save. If you win, he thinks you're just too adorable (even if disgustingly so), and the opponent is considered shaken (–2 to all attacks and checks) when acting against you for one round. You can maintain the effect (requiring a move action each round). The effect ends when you stop or when any of your targets suffers damage from your actions, and you cannot resume it during the same encounter. Each additional rank moves the number of targets you can affect one step up the **Time and Value Progression Table** or allows you to choose a different interaction.

LAST STAND — GENERAL

You can be a bloody mess, but you still find that one last ounce of strength needed to prevail. You can use extra effort to ignore all penalties from damage conditions during a single round.

LOW PROFILE — GENERAL, RANKED

You're a cipher, falling through the cracks of society so that people just don't remember you well. All Computer, Gather Information, and Knowledge checks made to retrieve information about you suffer a penalty equal to –2 per rank. If you're using the Reputation rules from the *Mastermind's Manual*, use the feat by the same name included there.

MECHANICAL GENIUS — SKILL

You are so familiar with machines that you can fix and break them in your sleep. Choose a type of technology or type of technological item available in the setting (such as steam engines, computers, alchemical transmutation circles, weapons, etc.). You gain a +4 bonus to Craft and Disable Device checks used to fix or sabotage items of the chosen technology, not subject to the setting's PL.

NINJA RUN — GENERAL, RANKED

By leaning your body forward and running with your arms stretched backwards, you can cover great distances without fail. When you move at your

all-out pace, you can move for one full minute without tiring. After that, the normal rules for all-out movement apply (you can move a number of rounds equal to your Constitution score before needing to make Constitution checks each round). While using this feat, you do not lose any speed for moving through natural difficult terrain (does not apply to terrain made difficult by powers such as Environmental Control). For each additional rank in this feat, you move the amount of time you can run unimpeded up one step on the **Time and Value Progression Table**. You can interrupt your ninja run at any time, but if you suffer any damage while you run like this, you become fatigued. You cannot use this feat when fatigued, since you cannot move all out while fatigued.

ONLINE RESEARCH — SKILL

People are icky, and you don't need to talk to them to find things out. You can use your Computers skill instead of Gather Information when looking for information that would normally be acquired by talking to people and buying them drinks. You can use this feat together with feats like Well-Informed, which normally require a Gather Information check.

PERFECT TIMING — FORTUNE

You are always there when needed. You can spend a hero point to arrive at the scene, unless you're actively engaged doing something somewhere else. If you arrive to the middle of combat, you roll initiative as normal. The Gamemaster can determine that you are just too far away to arrive.

POWER PROXY — GENERAL, RANKED

You may not be able to manifest powers, but you are a natural conduit for the powers of others. As a full action, you can synchronize with a willing ally within 50 feet per rank. From that moment onward, your ally can use you as the point of origin for any of her powers, as long as you are in range of each other. If you are in different dimensions, you can only channel those powers with the Dimensional power feat. You both act on the same Initiative (the lower of the two), and you spend a move action while she uses the normal action for her power. She must be able to see or perceive the intended target, so she cannot use you to circumvent cover or concealment, unless she can somehow use your own senses as well. She cannot use powers with a personal range through you, but you can channel her powers with a touch range, with you doing the touching. Your synchronization ends when you synchronize with another ally or when either you or your synchronized ally fall unconscious (which includes just falling asleep).

RHYTHM OF COMBAT — SKILL

Your tactical knowledge lets you know how well you and your friends are doing in battle. As a move action, you can make a Knowledge (tactics) check (DC 15). If you succeed, you are aware of the number and nature of any injury and harmful conditions affecting all allies in line of sight. You also receive this information about enemies in line of sight, if your Knowledge (tactics) check meets a DC equal to 10 + the enemy's Fortitude save bonus. You can make this check as a free action, by increasing the DC by +5.

ROUSING SPEECH — SKILL, RANKED

Whether by inspiration, deception, or intimidation, you can motivate others to try their best. Choose Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Perform when you acquire this feat. You are subject to the normal guidelines for interaction skills. Take a standard action and make the chosen interaction skill check (DC 15). If you succeed, you are considered to be aiding a number of allies equal to your Charisma modifier. You grant your affected allies a +2 bonus to a particular check or save you choose when you use this skill (Strength checks, Toughness saves, etc.). If they haven't used the bonus at the beginning of your next turn, it is lost. You may take this feat more than once. Each time, it applies to a different interaction skill.

SALVAGE — GENERAL

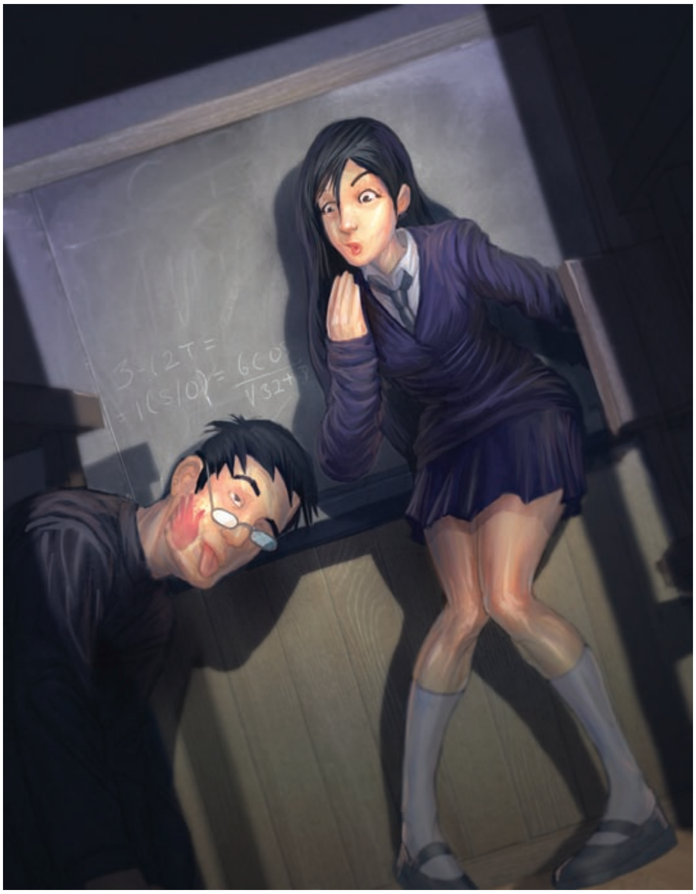
You can cannibalize a machine for its parts, so that you can use them later. When faced with a machine, you can make a Craft check (DC 15) to "borrow" some parts. You can also apply this feat as part of a Disable Device check to sabotage a machine, at the appropriate DC. If you succeed, you can "store away" a +1 bonus to a Craft check to build something with a similar technology (including the checks for inventions). If you're using the Wealth bonus option, this bonus can apply to the Wealth check to buy the parts instead. For every 5 points by which you exceed the task's DC, you gain an additional +1 worth of parts. You can apply up to a +5 bonus from salvaged parts to a construction check, and once you use a bonus, it's gone, now a part of the new creation. You cannot salvage temporary inventions; their parts are used up and too unstable to grant a lasting bonus.

SENSE MURDEROUS INTENT — SKILL

Enemies who wish you ill have a hard time hiding from you. You can use your Sense Motive skill instead of Notice to pinpoint a target that is actively hostile against you and enjoying any form of cover or concealment. The target must be within 60 feet for his murderous intent to be noticeable by you.

SLAP SILLY — COMBAT, RANKED

You can react before he succeeds and slap any perv who tries to grab you. If you are hit by a grapple attack, make a normal attack roll with any attack that takes at most a standard action and that you can use readily. Instead of dealing damage, the grapple fails, and the attacker must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + rank) or be dazed for one round. If you are grappled by a ranged power, you can only react with a ranged power that can reach the offending party. Male heroes might want to change this feat's name to something more manly, to avoid embarrassment.



TASK FOCUS — SKILL, RANKED

They say that overspecialization is death; they haven't met you. Choose a specific task or situation that can be performed with a skill check, such as keeping watch at night for Notice, fire-element pet monsters for Knowledge (life sciences), or stealth power armor for Craft (mechanical). When making checks that involve your chosen specialization, you gain a bonus equal to one-half your ranks in that skill. Additional ranks allow you to choose a new task in the same or a different skill.

TECH FAMILIARITY — GENERAL

Even if you grew up with a particular type of technology, you understand other types. Choose one technology base existent in the setting that is different from the one you're used to handling. You no longer suffer a –4 penalty from working with such technology (see the **Unfamiliar Technology** sidebar on page 37). Possible alternate technologies include biotechnology, crystal growth, magical circuitry, etc. The available types of technology depend on the Gamemaster and the setting.

TRUTH SENSE — SKILL

You can make an automatic Sense Motive check when you hear someone telling a lie or hiding the truth, whether you suspect them of duplicity or not. This is basically an application of the Super-Senses (detect) power.

UP THE WALL — SKILL

You can jump your way over walls and other high obstacles. You can use your Acrobatics skill instead of Climb to scale an incline, provided you have places to jump from separated by at most half of your normal speed. These can be narrow handholds, a parallel wall in an alley, or even a conveniently positioned friend.

WELL-KNOWN — GENERAL, RANKED

People can't help but recognize you. This feat works in reverse from Well-Informed: whenever you meet another character, the Gamemaster rolls a Gather Information check on that character's behalf. You gain a bonus to interaction checks with that person equal to twice the ranks in this feat. This feat does not apply if you are using the Reputation option from the *Mastermind's Manual*.

WITHSTAND DAMAGE — COMBAT

Dodging is for wimps. You stand your ground in the face of an incoming energy blast the size of a mountain and take it like a real man...or woman... or android... When you are the target of an attack, you can take a penalty of up to –5 on your dodge defense bonus and add the same number (up to +5) to your Toughness save bonus. Your Defense bonus cannot be reduced below +0, and your Toughness bonus cannot more than double. If you reduce your dodge bonus to +0, you are considered flat-footed, and all attacks made against you are considered surprise attacks, even if you have Uncanny Dodge. You can declare this change as a free action or as a reaction, but only once in a turn and before your opponent makes his attack roll; the new values remain until the beginning of your next turn.

ZEN STRIKE — COMBAT

You can strike at your target's pressure points to cause more pain. You add your Wisdom bonus instead of your Strength bonus to your melee damage bonus, limited by PL. You still use Strength for things like grappling, the Climb skill, etc.

POWERS

When they display supernatural powers, manga heroes are not so different from Western comic book heroes. They just dispense with the colorful outfits in favor of less flashy clothes, like traditional samurai garb, cool trench coats, or uniforms (school or military).

POWERS AS FEATS

Manga heroes are particularly apt to gain 1-point powers as feats instead. The cost is the same (1 power point), but a power gained as a feat is not subject to effects relating to powers, such as Nullify. The Gamemaster should consider the flavor of the series when determining if a power is available as a feat. This option is described in detail in the *Mastermind's Manual*, and the **Martial Arts** chapter has a number of suggestions about supernatural fighting styles that grant such abilities as part of their training regimes.

COMBOS

A staple of fighting videogames inherited from manga and anime action sequences is the combo, a series of attacks and powers that accumulate progressively towards devastating effects. The Linked power feat can achieve this somewhat, but the final effect is merely the sum of its parts, while the traditional combo is a much more spectacularly greater whole.

The Combo Finish power is a combination of a general power, combat feats, and power feats. As defined under its description, the **Combo Finish** power can be any power you can purchase with the 5 power points per rank it grants, but it can only be activated once the hero accumulates a number of combo points equal to twice the number of ranks in the Combo Finish power.

OPTION: COMBO ELEMENTS

Add this power feat to any power that you wish to include in a Combo.

COMBO ELEMENT

You can use a power as a step towards a devastating final result. If the power works successfully against its target, you are granted a certain number of combo points. These combo points can only be used to activate a Combo Finish power (see in the next section). You cannot assign this power feat to powers with a Personal range.

- **Combo Actions:** A hero can gain combo points by successfully using a combo action. Combo actions are powers with the Combo Element power feat or actions described by the Combo (Action) feat. A combo action always has a specific target, and it always involves a roll against the target's Defense or the power forces the target to make an opposed check or a saving throw. An attack is considered "successful" for the purpose of gaining combo points if the target must make a Toughness, Fortitude, or Will save in response to the attack (a Reflex save helps the target avoid an attack altogether). Even if the target succeeds, the attack succeeded in touching him, even if it didn't damage him, and thus the hero can gain combo points.
- **Accumulating Combo Points:** A hero gains a number of combo points equal to the number of combo-awarding actions he has consecutively performed on the same target on consecutive rounds. This means that when the hero first uses a combo power or action, he gains one combo point. If on the second round he succeeds at a consecutive combo action, he gains two combo points (now 3 in total). If on the third consecutive round he succeeds at yet another combo action, he gains three combo

points (now 6 in total). After reaching five combo points per action, any subsequent combo action only rewards five more combo points.

A hero loses *all* his accumulated combo points if, by the end of his turn, he has not succeeded at a combo action on the same target as all previous combo actions. You can spend a hero point at any point in the round to retain accumulated combo points, allowing you a single round to perform non-combo actions or make up for failed combo actions.

- **Holding the Charge:** If, for some reason, you need to hold your accumulated combo points until a better chance presents itself, you can keep your accumulated combo points without further accumulation for a round with a Concentration check (DC 10, +1 for every consecutive round), as a free action. You can only do this once you have enough combo points to unleash at least one of your Combo Finish powers; otherwise, you must keep accumulating points.
- **Interruptions:** As with the videogames this option is meant to emulate, your opponents may interrupt your combo by stopping you from accumulating combo points for a round or acting in a way that you lose a charge you've been trying to hold.

NEW POWERS AND OPTIONS

This section introduces new powers for use by manga-themed heroes from many genres. Some of these powers are actually power arrays and templates using the options found already in *Mutants & Masterminds,* and others are new options for existing powers and new power modifiers.

BANISH

Effect: Attack	**Action:** Standard
Range: Ranged	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 2 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Will

You can force creatures that do not belong back to where they do. When purchasing this power, choose a type of creature that exists in the setting but does not belong to the same dimension as you; it can be ghosts, demons, or fourth-dimensional dream eaters from Dimension X. When you touch one of these creatures with this power, it must make a Will save or be sent to its home dimension. This is basically the Super-Movement (dimensional) power with the Attack, Range (Ranged) extra, and the Limited (specific extradimensional species) flaw.

EXTRAS

- **Universal (+1):** Your Banish attack can force any kind of extradimensional or summoned target to return to its place of origin.

POWER FEATS

- **Affects Insubstantial:** You should add one or both ranks of this power feat for Banish to affect incorporeal creatures like ghosts or spirits.
- **Triggered:** You can fix the effect upon a magic circle that activates when the creature passes through it.

BATTLE FORM

Effect: Alteration	**Action:** Standard
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Continuous
Cost: 4 points per rank	

You can assume a much more powerful battle form. This can be a bioarmor that resides within your body, allowing yourself to be possessed by the ghost of a powerful warrior, or unlocking some latent potential. Whatever the case,



this power is blatant and changes your appearance dramatically (you grow chitinous armor plates, your hair grows yellow and spiky, you become the possessing spirit, etc.). All your powers manifest with very noticeable special effects corresponding to the nature of your battle form. Each rank gives you 5 power points you can use to purchase the new form's traits, which stack with your normal traits. You can purchase extra ranks for traits you already have or entirely new traits. You can maintain the form for one round per rank, after which all the purchased traits vanish (as per the Total Fade extra); you could take the Slow Fade power feat to extend this duration. You cannot assume your battle form again until you rest for at least one hour or enter into a trance for 10 minutes (as per the Trance feat).

POWER DRAWBACKS

- **Activation:** You may have to make a power check to enter the Battle Form (see **Drawbacks**, page 53). Because a second-stage Battle Form (see below) is a sustained effect, a Battle Form with this drawback would require a power check each round for you to maintain it; failure forces the hero to return to his first-stage Battle Form.

EXTRAS

- **Second Stage:** You gain a number of power points equal to rank x3 to purchase more traits, representing a "second stage" combat form. The augmented traits from the second stage combat form stack with those of the first, and they last until the original battle form would expire *without* the Slow Fade power fate (at which point the hero returns to his first-stage Battle Form, if Battle Form does have the Slow Fade feat). Activating the second stage combat form is a full action, and it has a sustained duration, so if you become unable to

BATTLE FORM AND BOOST

Battle Form is actually a middle point between Boost and Alternate Form, giving you more control over which traits are augmented and how. This power already considers the effects of the Fades flaw and the Noticeable drawback. Battle forms represent the abilities of heroes of the shounen genre, who can concentrate their inner strength and become something far greater than what they are. This is not a Normal Identity drawback, since their normal forms can have and use powers. The Gamemaster can limit the availability of the Boost power for purchase with Battle Form points.

perform free actions, you come out of the second stage form unless you succeed at a Concentration check.

FLAWS

- **Tiring:** Applying this flaw means that your combat form somehow drains you of your usual reserves of energy. It affects you when you return to your normal form.

COMBO FINISH

Effect: General	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Varies
Cost: 3 points per rank (see text)	**Saving Throw:** Varies

You can build up a devastating consequence for a series of successful attacks. Each rank of this power awards you 5 power points to purchase a Combo Finish move (see **Combos** earlier in this section). The Combo Finish move cannot purchase ranks in another Combo Finish, Device, Summon (Minions), Area powers, or any other power that the GM determines is inappropriate for a Combo Finish move. Also, a Combo Finish cannot be part of an array. You can only unleash your Combo Finish when you have gained a number of combo points equal to twice your Combo Finish ranks. You can use your Combo Finish power on the first available standard action after you meet the combo point price, and you must use it on the same target as all the combo actions. You can have different Combo Finish powers with different costs; you decide which one to unleash if you have the necessary combo points (you lose any leftover combo points if you accumulate enough points for the most expensive power but choose to unleash the cheaper one.)

CURSE OF (FLAW OR DRAWBACK)

Effect: Trait	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Instant (lasting)
Cost: 3 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Will

You are able to impose a heinous impairment upon your enemies. When you purchase this feat, select a particular flaw or drawback that you impose on a single trait of your target. Whenever the target wants to use the cursed trait, the Curse takes effect. Targets that already suffer from the chosen flaw or drawback effect in some way are not affected (you cannot make a blind martial artist any more blind). If the flaw or drawback is open to definition, you must define it before making it a Curse. Thus, a Curse of Muteness or a Curse of Limited to cats is possible, but a Curse of Disability or a Curse of Limited is not. A target who successfully saves against a Curse power cannot be the target of the same Curse for one day.

EXTRAS

- **Improved Curse (+2):** The effect of the curse affects all of the target's applicable traits.

DEVICE

Additional types of Devices for manga heroes include a magical girl's mystical item, a pet monster container, and a mecha pilot's giant robot or power armor.

POWER FEATS

- **Summonable:** You can call your Device to your hands from a physical location that others can access, such as a locker, under your bed, or a hidden cave in the woods. You can return the Device to its storage as a free action, as long as it's in your hands.

POWER DRAWBACKS

- **Conditional Ownership:** You may use the Device, but it's not exactly yours; you are using it with the true owner's permission or without her knowledge. The value of this drawback depends on how much leeway you have in using the Device: –1 if you have relatively free use of it and it can be taken away only if you disobey or seriously countermand the Device's owner; –2 if you can only use the equipment under the owner's orders or guidelines (as in military or police equipment), and –3 if the equipment can only be used under specific orders and supervision. Using the equipment for purposes outside the flaw's limits risks incarceration or more severe punishment. Buying off this drawback represents gaining full ownership of the Device for whatever reason.
- **Key:** The Device requires a second item to make it work. It can be a magical key that opens the lock on a magical book, the access datacard for a mecha's operating systems, or the trigger mechanism of an arcane machine. This drawback is worth 1 point if the key is something readily accessible and hard to lose, 2 points if it's hard to reach or can be lost, and 3 if it's both hard to reach and easily misplaced. The key must be something that can be held in one hand. Devices with the Summonable feat may designate a key as the object necessary to summon them.
- **Normal Appearance:** This drawback is the same as Normal Identity but applies to the Device, which looks like a normal piece of equipment until it assumes its true shape. None of the Device's powers are available while the Device is in its normal appearance (1 to 4 power points; see **Drawbacks** on page 124 of *Mutants & Masterminds*).

DIMENSIONAL POCKET

Few manga heroes display this power blatantly. In most cases, they do it subconsciously—they put something inside their robe's sleeves, jackets, or bags without ever stopping to realize that they shouldn't be moving around with so much weight. Sometimes, a dimensional pocket is the place where a hero stores his summonable mecha or magic armor; other times, the hero can create a secret haven inside his pocket.

POWER FEATS

- **Furnished:** Each time you purchase this feat, you gain 5 equipment points to add furnishing to your dimensional pocket (labs, communication, fully furnished dormitories, mecha repair stations, etc.). These points can be used to purchase headquarters traits.
- **Time Passage:** With this power feat, time inside the pocket can pass at a different pace than in the normal world. Decide if it passes faster or slower when acquiring this feat. If time is faster inside, multiply the time that passes inside the pocket by 1 + the number of ranks in this feat, up to by 10. If time is slower, divide the time that passes inside

NEW POWERS

NAME	EFFECT	ACTION	RANGE	DURATION	SAVE	COST
Banish	Attack	Standard	Ranged	Instant	Will	2/rank
Battle Form	Alteration	Standard	Personal	Continuous	-	4/rank
Combo Finish	General	Standard	Touch	Varies	Varies	3/rank (see text)
Curse of (Flaw or Drawback)	Trait	Standard	Touch	Instant (L)	Will	3/rank
Expel (Creature)	Attack	Standard	Area (Burst)	Instant (L)	Will	2/rank
(Martial Arts) Stance	Alteration	Free	Personal	Varies	-	5/rank
Seal	Attack	Standard	Ranged	Sustained (L)	Will	3-4/rank
Shadow Clone	General	Standard	Touch	Sustained	Will	3/rank
Substitution	Defense	Reaction	Personal	Instant	-	2/rank

the pocket by 2 for 1 rank, 5 for 2 ranks, or 10 for 3 ranks; for 4 ranks, time doesn't pass at all.

POWER DRAWBACKS

- **Anchored:** A dimensional pocket can be a special but otherwise normal item (–1), or it can be anchored to a specific location (–2). The pocket can only be accessed at the anchoring location or through the anchor item. Destroying the anchor spills all the pocket's contents into the outside world. A location is considered destroyed if it's reduced to half its general structural integrity (destroyed foliage, shattered furniture, displaced ornamentation, etc.)

EXTRAS

- **Portal (+2):** You can open a portal to access your pocket. The portal's maximum size is your own size category, increasing by one category with ranks in the Progression feat. Anyone can reach or pass through the portal while it's open, including you, if the portal is the right size and the pocket has enough capacity. Opening and closing the portal is a free action, and the portal remains open for as long as you wish.

FLAWS

- **Storage Only (–1):** No creatures can enter the pocket; it only stores objects.

EXPEL (CREATURE)

Effect: Attack	**Action:** Standard
Range: Area (Burst)	**Duration:** Instant (Lasting)
Cost: 2 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Will

The hero can perform rituals, cast spells, or chant charms that can expel supernatural entities from her immediate vicinity. Choose the type of supernatural being that this power affects, depending on the setting, such as undead, spirits, demons, fey, shadow illusions, virtual computer viruses, etc. It can also target the effects of certain powers such as Summon (Minion), Create Object, Duplication, Illusion, Shadow Clone, Plant Control, or other effects that create additional combatants or combat conditions. The Gamemaster can refuse a type that is too general or irrelevant in the setting. Only creatures that are somehow unnatural are eligible to be affected by this power.

When you use this power, all affected targets within 5 feet per rank from the hero must make a Will saving throw. If they fail, they are forcefully pushed back to the edge of the power's range and may not move any closer until they succeed at a Will save, made once per round at a +1 cumulative bonus each consecutive round. A creature that is possessing another's body counts as present in the area and has the option to flee in the possessed body or abandon it (which is why exorcists tie up their patients, to take away this option).

POWER FEATS

- **Affect Insubstantial/Dimensional:** You can add these feats to push back targets that are incorporeal or in a different dimension.
- **Alternate Power:** Suitable Alternate Power feats for this power include Banish*, Blast (holy, Limited to affected creatures), Drain Toughness (Ranged, Limited to affected creatures), Paralyze (Limited to affected creatures), Seal*, Snare (holy chains, Limited to affected creatures).
- **Expel Possessor:** The hero can expel a creature possessing another, even if it does not belong to the type normally affected by the hero's choice. Outside a possessed body, the creature is unaffected.

POWER DRAWBACKS

- **Power Loss:** The hero needs a symbol of faith or power to use this power. This drawback is worth 1 power point if the symbol can be reused indefinitely and 2 power points if it's used up with each use (as a prayer strip).

EXTRAS

- **Damaging (+2):** In addition to driving them away, your exorcism can also harm affected creatures. This power's damage bonus equals its rank.

FORCE FIELD

A manga hero's force field can have any source, from a priest's divine protection to a mecha's electromagnetic deflection shield generator.

POWER FEATS

- **Air-Tight:** The field prevents the passage of gas molecules. While this is a beneficial defense against toxic gas attacks, a character in the Field will deplete all breathable oxygen in five rounds in a Force Field of the same size as himself, with the air lasting five more minutes for every size category that the Force Field is larger.
- **Blocks Movement:** Force fields that cover an area can block movement through it. For each rank in this feat, choose a form of movement (physical, teleportation, dimensional, etc.). This feat can only be applied to Force Fields with the Ablative flaw. If you want to allow allies to move through the field while it's active, you must choose the Selective feat as well. The field only stops movement that intends to bypass it; it has no strength of its own and may not be used to hold, move, or affect objects and things in any other way than stopping their movement.

EXTRAS

- **Offensive (+4):** The field delivers a powerful shock to anyone who touches it, whether they are attacking you or you are attacking. The field's damage is equal to its ranks, although you can choose to apply this extra only to some of the force field's ranks.

FLAWS

- **Both Directions (–1):** The force field also blocks attacks from the hero or others protected by it. Add the field's ranks to all targets' Toughness saves, as well as any other extra the field might have.

ILLUSION

Illusions are the trademark of playful fox spirits as well as ninja deceivers, but they can also apply to holographic projectors.

POWER FEATS

- **Multiple Illusions:** An illusion with the Progression feat can occupy different locations within range. You can create as many individual illusions as the power's rank, provided they add up to the total area you can create with the Progression feat.

EXTRAS

- **Ephemeral (+1 or +3):** Your illusions are injected with some level of solidity that makes them half-real. Define where this solidity comes from: coherent energy simulation, ectoplasm, shadow energy, etc. For a +1 value, the illusion can have an effect equivalent to one third of the Illusion's rank; for a +3 value, it can have an effect similar to half of the Illusion's rank (rounded down). For example, a rank 3 Illusion of an open flame with Ephemeral +1 can have a +1 damage bonus, while a rank 8 Illusion of a wall with Ephemeral +3 can provide a +4 to defense due to its Ephemeral cover. The consequences of instant effects like damage, healing, or harmful conditions, as well as continuous or permanent effects have a lasting duration instead, allowing the victim to make a saving throw once per round. Once the victim successfully saves, the lingering effect disappears. A target that recognizes an illusion for what it is ignores the effect of an Ephemeral Illusion completely (so your allies who know of your illusions will not be healed by an illusory healing effect; they know it's not real). A victim of ephemeral damage who becomes unconscious or dying continues to save once per round and wakes up when he saves and the illusory damage conditions disappear.



FLAWS

- **Thematic (–1 to –3):** You can only create illusions of certain types of things. For a value of –1, you can only create illusions in a broad category (animals, vehicles, people, landscape features, etc.). For a value of –2, you can only create illusions of a narrow type (birds, mecha, warriors, vegetation, etc.); For a value of –3, you can only create illusions of a single type (eagles, MK-32 mecha fighters, copies of yourself, trees, etc.)

(MARTIAL ARTS) STANCE

Effect: Alteration	**Action:** Free
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Varies
Cost: 5 points per rank	

You have learned the secrets of a form of martial arts, which teaches you how to stand, how to breathe, and how to move in order to exploit your potential to its fullest.

You have 5 power points per (Martial Arts) Stance rank to apply to powers *and* feats related to your stance. Once you choose your (Martial Arts) Stance's traits, they are fixed and do not change. Powers included in the stance that are not Instant or Permanent must all have the same duration, which determines how long you're able to maintain your stance. Instant powers are only usable while you maintain the stance, unless they are meant to increase the ranks of powers you already have outside the stance. Instant powers can add features to powers you already have outside the stance, via the Linked extra. If your stance includes feats, you only enjoy their benefits while maintaining the stance. See **Chapter 4: Martial Arts** for more details about Martial Arts Stances and examples of different stances.

FLAWS

- **Weapon-Dependent (–1):** Choose a single type of weapon, such as straight swords, staves, nunchaku, spears, etc. Your style's balance and form depend on how this weapon complements your body, so you can only assume your Martial Arts Stance when wielding the chosen weapon. For the purpose of this flaw, "unarmed" doesn't count as a weapon.

POWER FEATS

- **Alternate Powers:** You can only maintain a single stance at a time, but you can learn any other stance with an equal or lesser cost as an Alternate Power feat of the first (switching between stances is a free action once per round). Switching or abandoning a stance cancels the bonuses accrued by an opponent using the Break the Style feat. You cannot create an alternate stance with the same powers as the original stance for the sole purpose of foiling the Break the Style feat.

- **Unreadable:** Your stance flows like water to adapt to your enemies' attempts to read you. When you buy this power feat, the Assessment and Break the Style feats don't work on you while you're in this stance.

POWER DRAWBACKS

- **Fixed Stance:** If your Martial Arts Stance includes a feat that allows you to shift your combat bonuses dynamically (Accurate Attack, All-Out Attack, Defensive Attack, Power Attack, or the new Withstand Damage), choosing this drawback forces you to decide upon a single fixed bonus and penalty for all of them. Whenever you adopt this stance, the fixed bonus and penalty come into effect automatically, and you cannot use the feat to shift them dynamically, even if you have the feat outside your Martial Arts Stance (you can use it normally when you're not in your Martial Arts Stance).

SEAL

Effect: Attack	**Action:** Standard
Range: Ranged	**Duration:** Sustained (Lasting)
Cost: 3-4 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Will

This power attempts to seal a target inside an object or a location for imprisonment. Although this power is used mainly against demons that are too powerful to kill (those that can resurrect, for example), it's not unknown for unfortunate heroes to suffer this fate at the hands of an evil sorcerer, only to be freed much, *much* later. This power is a version of Super-Movement (dimensional) (a particular prison dimension), with the Attack (Will Save), Range (Ranged), and Duration (Sustained) extras, and the Duration (Lasting) flaw. For 3 points per rank, the Seal is keyed to a particular object that can be misplaced, stolen, or destroyed (like a 3-point Device can be); for 4 points per rank, the Seal is anchored on a site that could be subject to Nullify or disturbance, but that would be much harder to do.

The interval at which an imprisoned victim can attempt to escape is one minute. Destroying the seal's anchor frees the victim.

Seals are often protected by additional traps, safeguards, and guardians, but those are not within the scope of this power.

POWER FEATS

- **Progression:** For each rank in this feat, the interval between saving throws to escape moves up one step on the **Time and Value Progression Table**.

POWER DRAWBACKS

- **Time Passage:** As per the Dimensional Pocket drawback in this book, but this only applies to slowing or freezing time inside the Seal.

EXTRAS

- **Inescapable (+2 or +4):** The Seal blocks the Super-Movement (dimensional) power, so victims cannot escape using it. For a value of +4, it also blocks all powers with the Dimensional feat.

SHADOW CLONE

Effect: General	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Sustained
Cost: 3 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Will.

You can create an illusory double of yourself next to you. This double looks, sounds, smells, and feels like you in every sense (except to Super-Senses that can detect such illusions), but it can act independently as if it had a mind of its own. The shadow clone can reproduce all that you can do, including the use of skills, feats, and powers, but it cannot produce any real effect with them except those that involve its "physical" state (such as using your Acrobatics skill bonus and your Up the Wall feat to climb up a wall, but not using your Knowledge (local) skill to give you an idea you may have missed). Its attacks don't damage, harm, or impede targets, but the target believes that he evaded or resisted such powers before thinking that the attacks are not actually real. The clone may perform physical tasks as per the Telekinesis power, using your Strength, and it vanishes instantly when subjected to an effect that would deal require a Toughness, Fortitude, or Reflex save. The shadow clone *can* pretend to be you while you hide, and it can perform aid actions.

POWER FEATS

You can choose the following Power Feats from the Duplicate power: Mental Link, Progression, and Sacrifice.

- **Independent Appearance:** If you have any power that alters your appearance, such as (Alternate) Form, Morph, Illusion (visual), or Shapechange, you can make each of your shadow clones have a different appearance than you (or each other) when they manifest. The alternate appearance must be one you can attain with your powers.
- **Interpose:** If you apply this feat to the Shadow Clone power, any clone you create is able to sacrifice itself whenever you would be hit, if it's adjacent to you.
- **Subtle:** With this power feat, your shadow clones are completely indistinguishable from the real thing, even to Super-Senses.

POWER DRAWBACKS

- **Telltale:** Your shadow clones are actually made of your own shadow with this drawback. While any shadow clone is manifested, you don't have a shadow (but your clones do), which enables your enemies to distinguish which one is the real you. You cannot use the Interpose power feat on a power with this flaw.

EXTRAS

- **Horde (+1):** As per the Duplication power.

FLAWS

- **Feedback:** Each time a shadow clone is destroyed, you must make a Toughness save (DC 15 + rank of the attack that made it vanish). For each clone that was destroyed by the same attack (in the case of area attacks), the damage bonus increases by 1. The damage is non-lethal, even if the attack was lethal.

SUBSTITUTION

Effect: Defense	**Action:** Reaction
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 2 points per rank	

You have the frustrating ability to avoid attacks that would hit you, by tricking your attackers into hitting an illusory decoy. When you are hit by an attack that targets you specifically, you can make a power check as a reaction. If the result is greater than the attack or Reflex save DC, you disappear from the spot and appear at any location within (power rank x10) feet, leaving behind a purely narrative replacement (traditionally a sawn-off log). You cannot buy more ranks in this power than the setting's PL. You can make an immediate Stealth check when you reappear. Each time you use this power in the same encounter, you suffer a –2 penalty to your power check, as your attackers grow wary of your little trick. This is not a mode of teleportation; this power assumes that the target that an

attacker struck or imprisoned was always a substitute and you were really hiding or following from somewhere else. The Gamemaster may disallow the use of this power if you could not possibly be somewhere else when your substitute was attacked.

SUPER-MOVEMENT

Martial arts, cybernetic enhancements, or plain magic can help the hero move in outstanding ways. Include the following movement modes in this power's options:

- **Perfect Balance:** While moving, the hero does not need to make any Acrobatics check to keep her balance while moving through narrow, inclined, or awkward surfaces. She can move at full speed.
- **Zero-G:** The hero can change direction a number of times per round equal to 1 + Dexterity bonus while floating in zero gravity.

POWER MODIFIERS

The powers of manga heroes are heavily customized to reflect not only their nature and origin, but also to bring consistency to the series. Very often, all heroes will have many power modifiers in common, as the series they star in requires that all powers work in a certain way, such as all powers being Unreliable (or at least all of the heroes' powers).

The previous section already contains several new modifiers for specific powers. The following extras and flaws can apply to several powers and simulate some ways in which powers commonly manifest in general manga and anime series.

EXTRAS

As per the normal rules, all extras increase the cost of a power's rank by +1, unless otherwise specified.

CONDUCTOR +1 MODIFIER

You can assign this extra to any power with a Touch range, designating a medium through which the power can be transmitted when you add this extra. The medium can be a general type of item, a substance, or an environmental condition, such as a shocking strike that can travel through (not surprisingly) electrical conductors or a hero that can sap his victims' Will through any kind of sword. In addition to the normal mode of delivery, a power with a conductor effect can travel in any direction and through any obstacle up to a range of (power rank x5) feet, even if the target is behind cover, as long as the selected medium touches both you and the target, and you can perceive the target with a sense that is either acute or accurate. If the medium is a weapon, a successful normal attack with the weapon can be used to discharge the power, and a ranged weapon can carry the power up to the extra's normal range. Weapons with a longer range can still reach beyond this range, they just simply "lose" the charge. If the weapon attack is part of another power (like Strike), use the Linked feat instead. Note that some effects of this feat can be used as a stunt with a hero point, under the GM's approval.

IMPASSABLE COUNTER +1 MODIFIER

Even if your power proves too weak to counter another power completely, it still provides a small degree of protection by sapping the energy from the attack it failed to counter. When you fail to counter a power (see **Countering Powers**, page 70-71 of *Mutants & Masterminds*), the amount by which your attacker's power check result exceeded yours is the attacking power's maximum rank limit. If this limit is lower than the attacking power's rank, its effect is reduced accordingly. This extra can apply to the Nullify power.

OVERWHELMING COUNTER +1 MODIFIER

Your power has the potency to overwhelm powers that you counter with it. When you successfully counter a power (see **Countering Powers**, page 70-71 of *Mutants & Masterminds*), your own power overwhelms the other, and the excess energy surges towards the attacker. For every two points by which your power check exceeds your attacker's, one rank of the power you used to counter targets your attacker up to your countering power's full ranks. The overwhelming counter is treated as a normal successful attack; that is, the countered attacker can make saving throws, reaction powers, etc. against the overwhelming counter. This extra does not apply to the Nullify power.

FLAWS

As per the normal rules, all flaws reduce the cost of a power's rank by –1, unless otherwise specified.

CONDUIT -1 TO –2 MODIFIER

You may know how to use a power with this flaw, but you lack the ability, energy, or other requisite to actually manifest it. You need to synch with another individual who has that requisite but not the knowledge. Choose another character when acquiring this flaw, who can be another hero, an NPC, or even a minion; the conduit character must be within range of this flaw at the beginning of your turn (you cannot move to him during your turn and use your power) or you cannot use your power. For a –1 modifier, you must be within Ranged distance, and for a –2 modifier, you must touch your conduit.

CHAINED -1 MODIFIER

Your power depends on the success of another action to manifest. When you acquire this flaw, select another of your powers, which becomes the chained power's prerequisite. You cannot use the Chained power if you did not succeed in using the prerequisite in your previous turn. You cannot assign this flaw to an alternate power inside an array; it only applies to the array's main power.

You can Chain multiple powers in a series, with B following A, and C following B, and so forth, and each successive power gains the cost reduction of this flaw, but you must use the Chained power in that order and no other. So, for example, in order to use Chained power C, you need to first use A, then B. If multiple powers are Chained to the same prerequisite, then successfully using the prerequisite power allows you to activate any one of the Chained powers depending upon it.

CHARGE POWER -1 TO –2 MODIFIER

A power with this flaw needs time to charge, and it may activate only partially if the charge is not complete. The action normally needed to use the power becomes the action in which you charge one rank. You must spend subsequent actions charging up to the power's total ranks, at which time it goes off as normal. Adding the Activation drawback forces you to make a power check for each charge. If you are distracted (see the **Concentration** skill, page 44 of *Mutants & Masterminds*, for details) or stop charging the power before the charge is full, the power can be partially (–1 point) activated, as if it were a power with the number of ranks you managed to charge until that point, or it can automatically fail (–2 points), wasting your time and effort. Powers that can be used as a reaction or a free action, or that require longer than a full round, may not gain this flaw. The Progression feat can increase the number of ranks you can charge with each action by one extra rank per Progression rank, up to three ranks per charge. For example, a Charge Power flaw applied to a power used as a standard action requires the hero to spend a standard action to charge one rank; with one rank in Progression, he can charge two ranks per standard action, and with three ranks in Progression, he can charge three ranks per standard action.

COMPLICATIONS AND DRAWBACKS

Creating a three-dimensional manga hero requires cooperation between the player and the Gamemaster, because the most believable complications are those that are anchored in the setting.

Complications and drawbacks are present in all genres of manga, from the bumbling incompetence of the cute mascot to the horrifying secret behind an anti-hero's angst. Sometimes that cute mascot girl has a horrifying secret, too. They can be played for laughs or tears, and most manga will have at least a little of both. Even a melancholic war drama can have elements of comic relief without hurting the tone of the series.

HERO POINTS AND SETTING THE TONE

Awarding hero points is a tool the Gamemaster uses to reinforce the heroic feel of a series. In *Mecha & Manga*, they can also serve to reinforce the mood, theme, and tone, since each series will have its own "feel."

The kinds of complications and setbacks a manga hero will face can vary wildly, depending on the series. A parody of epic fantasy will have complications like elves whose long ears poke people's eyes all the time and snarky talking swords, while the protagonists of a psychological horror story will struggle with memory lapses that make them wonder if the killer they've been chasing isn't really them.

Heroes in manga and anime stories receive hero points for doing things that maintain and even enrich the setting's tone and genre as part of roleplaying and stunt awards. In comedy, this can mean setting one's self up for a pratfall; in dramas, it would be overreacting to personal crises. Each setting has its own unique flavor, and by rewarding actions and complications that play along with it, the Gamemaster guides the players toward the right tone and mood, so they are stocked with enough hero points for the final episodes.

The following are examples of series-specific setbacks, stunts, roleplaying situations, and unexpected complications that would award hero points:

SERIOUS (AND A LITTLE VIOLENT) MAGICAL GIRL SERIES

The protagonist allows an evil spirit to enter her so it doesn't enter her little sister, and now her friends must find a way to cure her before all is lost. A team member recalls every single happy moment in her life to empower the spell to banish a demon that feeds on anxiety. The protagonist's best friend comes out and confesses his love for her in a tear-wrenching scene. The protagonist's father turns out to be the original sorcerer who brought all the demons into the world.

ACTION-PACKED INTERGALACTIC WAR SERIES, WITH MECHA

The mecha squadron becomes stranded behind enemy lines. The demolitions specialist flies through a gauntlet of antiaerial fire to drop an armed warhead on the enemy ship's Doomsday Cannon. The team's techie gives a rousing speech after the team's mecha were totaled and lifts all the pilots' spirits. The team discovers that their side is actually the bad guys.

COMEDY URBAN FANTASY SERIES

In a magical experiment gone awry, the character turns his lecherous girlfriend permanently invisible. A hero conjures the Seventh Lord of the Hellpits to help with next week's cultural festival. Two rival wizards get into a heated argument on what kind of magic is best: alchemical transmutation or emotion manipulation; they provide plenty of hands-on examples with their nearby friends. One of the heroes is the heir to the most powerful magical weapon in the history of magic, but she is a total klutz.

PSYCHIC HORROR AND INTRIGUE SERIES

After an encounter with a rogue psychic agent, the hero's own powers shut down and inflict him with intense pain when he tries to use them. The hero fakes being the victim of an enemy's powers with his own, coming back with a devastating surprise attack. A normal journalist has an intense discussion with the heroes about the morality of using psychic powers. The psychic powers slowly eat away at the heroes' mind and soul, so each time they use them, they come closer to becoming amoral vegetables.

SAMURAI DRAMA WITH SUPERNATURAL OVERTONES SERIES

The daimyo of the heroes' province is forced to declare them outlaws due to supernatural influence. The samurai leader stares down a wayward fox spirit into submission with his honor and virtue as his only weapons. The samurai are faced with the choice of clearing their name or saving a village from monster-taming bandits. The heroes' only ally is a ninja woman who is under a curse that will kill her if she reveals the last piece of information the heroes need to redeem themselves.

COMPLICATIONS

Manga heroes can have the same complications as their Western counterparts, and they are deeply colored by the setting's tone and mood. Some complications can be played outrageously, especially for comedic moments; others will significantly hinder and change the hero who faces them each time, but all of them award a hero point accordingly.

These are a few complications particular to manga heroes, plus some variant examples for complications already mentioned in *Mutants & Masterminds*.

EASILY DISTRACTED

You are fascinated by certain triggers such as events, objects, people, or ideas. Triggers can be anything, including attractive people, money, food, cute things, or weapons. When exposed to the trigger, you abandon what you're doing and do whatever it is you do with the object of your fascination, usually just stare at it in dumbstruck fascination. A sharp admonition from your friends can snap you back to attention, but some distractions can come at the worst possible moment.

GIRL/GUY MAGNET

You attract susceptible members of the opposite gender (and occasionally of the same gender, too) like bees to nectar. They are just drawn to you and fall helplessly in love (or lust), not letting go or giving you a minute's peace. Even worse, they will fight each other over you or to keep others from consummating a relationship, even interfering with your own pursuits of people you really like. These NPCs are not minions or even allies, for they can be just as or even more powerful than you or anyone in your group. You are not particularly good-looking, charming, or friendly; it's simply your fate to meet obsessed people.

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

You might be tempted to give your hero an unnatural hair color. While this is perfectly acceptable, check with the Gamemaster to see if the color could become a Complication. Anime began giving strange colors to characters' hair to respect manga designs, which were in turn limited by printing technology and the artists' own talents and styles. Many artists gave strange colors to some of their characters so they could be differentiated from other characters who basically looked the same. Currently, manga artists and anime character designers have moved forward and are making greater efforts to give each character a unique look to avoid the need to paint their hair green. A notable exception to this is romantic comedy anime based on dating games... being cookie-cutter series, the character designs certainly need strange hair coloring to tell the girls apart.

Strange features can also represent something else, especially in serious settings. Pink hair can be the result of a dye job that reflects the hero's funky personality, or it can be the by-product of genetic manipulation or psychic powers. Blonde hair on a Japanese hero can mean that his bloodline somewhere includes a Western ancestor, which is a mark of shame in samurai stories or a mark of cool in a modern school life comedy.

HONOR

It cannot be stressed how much honor matters in a samurai story, but many traditional Japanese institutions also work under strict or loose codes of honor.

MARKED

You are recognizable by some distinctive feature. This can be a tattoo, a scar, or simply being part of a species that is extremely rare in the game's setting. This can be played as a drawback if your unusual features impose a penalty on interaction skills, but otherwise any situation that would result from the mark is just a complication.

NEMESIS

Not as serious as an enemy, but much more important than a simple rivalry, you have somehow acquired a nemesis, someone who wants to see you fail but is not necessarily the story's antagonist. A nemesis can be a lunatic bent on world conquest but who sides with you when a bigger threat presents itself, a martial artist who wants to be the greatest warrior in the universe and you are his only obstacle, a classmate who's after the same girl as you, or a rival who wants to save the world as much as you do, but he simply wants to save it first. A nemesis is a heroic NPC of your same relative power level and with his own combination of traits. You cannot simply kill off a nemesis to get rid of this complication, for the nemesis will simply come back miraculously or be replaced by a friend or relative who wants revenge. Your nemesis's final fate will come at a climatic moment full of action and drama, whether you kill him or gain him as a powerful new ally. As an option, your nemesis can also gain hero points whenever you foil his plans or get in his way.

OBNOXIOUS

You can't help but be annoying to those around you. It could be a haughty attitude, sheer incompetence, or incorrigible naiveté. While people would tolerate these traits in others, for some reason they don't tolerate them in you, and you can face hostility during your interactions just for being you.

OWNED

You are the property of a large organization or a single individual. It may be that you are a special robot built by the organization, a freelance thief whose family's debts tie you to a powerful Yakuza clan, a soldier brainwashed to serve faithfully, etc. You must define how much leeway your "owners" allow you in your actions and the consequences you can face for defying their commands, so that the Gamemaster can judge when your status makes your life difficult enough to award a hero point.

PROTOCOLS

Your actions are governed or controlled by bureaucratic procedures, such as those for law enforcement agencies. Any gung-ho agent will tell you that this complication is just like being Owned, but that's just because they hate the paperwork. Protocols include requisites that must be met before taking on adventures, strict rules of engagement, or additional obligations after a mission. Acting outside established protocols can bring punishment your way, loss of privileges, or sometimes even cancellation of any advantage purchased with the Benefit feat.

SIGNIFICANT OTHER

A person important to you has a penchant for getting in trouble. Typically, this is a damsel in distress type of character, but in manga and anime, your significant other can be just marginally less capable than you, but she's always trying to prove herself and gets into trouble you will need to get her out of.

SECRETS

The secrets of manga heroes that count as complications range from the simple and embarrassing to the disturbing and bizarre, depending on the setting. This type of complication invariably becomes a subplot that the Gamemaster should feel more than encouraged to exploit and even integrate into the series' main plot. You can be a simple student whose secret is being the son of a famous pop singer, attracting unwelcome attention from classmates who are your mom's fans..You could be an elite cyborg investigator for Public Security Section 2, with several illegal mods to your cybernetic body that would get you arrested, at best, if discovered. Or, you could be a sweet, innocent florist whose previous career was demon-possessed serial killer. A very effective use of this complication is if you don't even know what your secret is while others do and just won't tell you, with discovering it part of the series' plot.

TEMPER

Flying off the handle works very well for comedy and, played as such, rarely has the consequences needed in order to be considered an actual complication. Still, what may be played for comedy one time can really get you in trouble another time, so the typical angry person who finds a way into every group can serve both as comic relief as well as a serious hindrance in delicate negotiations.

TROUBLED PAST

This is similar to the Secrets complication, except your past is known, or at least it's easy to find out. Your past can bring you trouble through othes' preconceived ideas on who you are and what you do, or it can provide the Gamemaster with teeth for the metaphor about past deeds coming back to bite you. For example, you may be shunned by the other ninja trainees because your family once disgraced the clan, you can be plagued by insecurities when training a new pet monster because you got your old one killed, or you simply have a history of being a toxic cook and nobody will eat your food.

WANTED

You are on the run with a price on your head. It doesn't matter if your pursuers are the authorities, a powerful criminal or private organization, or simply the popular girl in school that declared you fair target for pranks and bullying (because she hates being attracted to you, of course), the point is that you cannot hope for any moment of peace and quiet to last for long. The Gamemaster decides how dogged the pursuit is, based on just what it was that you did or who you are to provoke such active persecution.

DRAWBACKS

Whereas complications help enrich a hero's place in the story, drawbacks round up her capabilities by providing personal difficulties to overcome. The following are drawbacks a hero can gain, in addition to those found in *Mutants & Masterminds*.

ACTIVATION

You have a difficult time using the power affected by this drawback. It only applies to powers that are activated without a dice roll, which means that attack powers are not eligible for this drawback. Adding this drawback to a power requires that you make a power check to activate it; its value depends on how useful the power is (+1 if you will hardly use it or +3 if you will use it with regularity) and how hard it is to activate it (base DC 10 + power's rank, +1 for every 5 points added to the DC).

ATTACK NAME

This specific application of Power Loss is very common in anime of many genres. It has a value of +1. A power with this drawback has a colorful name, like "Demon Fist of Oblivion" or "Sacred Mountain Fire Blade," and you are expected to shout it aloud when you use it. If you don't shout out the attack's name, you cannot use the power (see **Chapter 6: Gamemastering Manga** for more options about attack names). In order to squeeze this drawback for maximum effect, the Gamemaster can require that *you* do the shouting, not simply say, "Tetsuko shouts her attack's name."

CONFINED MOVEMENT

This drawback prevents the hero from leaving a narrowly defined area. This may represent, for example, a ghost that is cursed to haunt a particular place, an android that cannot venture far from the mainframe that holds his intelligence, or a government-licensed magical girl that is only registered for travel in a specific region. The drawback's value starts at 1 for 5 miles around a central point, and it increases or decreases according to the **Extended Range Table**. The hero can spend one hour outside its confinement; increase or reduce the value for each step down or up the **Time and Value Progression Table**, respectively. Reduce the drawback's value if the hero can safely be in secondary sites of the same or related type (consecrated land, magical circles, particular holographic projectors, etc.); add one more site of the same area as the base drawback for every point you reduce from the drawback's value. When exceeding the allowed time outside the confinement area, the hero becomes fatigued; if she does not return in another time interval, she becomes exhausted. These conditions disappear only after normal rest inside the confinement area.

CURSED

This drawback represents an adverse and chronic condition that ails you and hampers your life. A curse works like a feat or a power, but inflicts a negative condition rather than an advantage. A curse can be a reverse Boost that suddenly reduces your traits, forcing you to recover them little by little or a corrupted Emotion Control that changes your mood to that of others around you. Sometimes, a permanent power can be explained as a curse. All curses have a trigger, a specific event that activates them, such as a night with a full moon or speaking a particular word. The curse need not be mystical in nature, such as a chronic disease or a nano-implant that restricts the character's ability to function when the trigger activates. Use the guidelines for frequency and intensity in *Mutants & Masterminds* to determine the drawback's value.

FAST FADE

A power with the Fades flaw can be made to lose effectiveness even faster. For every one point of value in this drawback, move the number of power points lost with each "use" one step up the **Time and Value Progression Table**. This progression cannot exceed the cost of the power, but it can be high enough that the power can be used only once or for a single round until you recharge.

FOCUS

You cannot freely manifest a power with this drawback; it requires an object you must be touching to focus your energy or concentration. The power manifests through the object, not through you, giving the appearance that the object could be the one manifesting the power. This drawback has a value of –1, and the focus can be anything of a particular type (for example, any sword, any earring, etc.). For powers that can only be activated through specific items, see the Device power.

GEASA

A geasa is a particular kind of curse in which you have a certain obligation or taboo that you *must* obey or else face dire consequences. Common geasa include prohibitions from eating certain foods or engaging in certain activities or a promise that you must fulfill, a holy (and life-long) mission. Use the guidelines for curses, with the trigger becoming the geasa's conditions and the punishment the actual power effect.

HUNGER

You do not derive you nourishment from normal food. More subtle and extensive than a simple Power Loss, Hunger affects your very life essence. This can be a vampire's need for blood, a robot needing to plug into a battery to recharge, or stranger things like a mythical baku's need for dreams. Each day that you spend without consuming your special food (Uncommon frequency, +1), you gain an automatic Bruised condition that cannot be recovered by rest, skills, or powers. When you indulge your hunger, the Bruised conditions disappear. The intensity of this drawback depends on how exotic your form of nourishment is, from +0 for something relatively common and easy to obtain like shrine offerings or junk metal to +2 for truly strange things like souls, hopes, or memories. You should purchase a power or skill that allows you to gain sustenance, like the Fascinate feat to feed off attention or any flavor of Drain (Trait) to feed off such things as blood (Constitution), beauty (Charisma), memories (Intelligence), or raw life force (Toughness). Adjust this drawback's value by one each time the frequency of your need to eat goes up or down one step in the **Time and Value Progression Table.**

LOW PAIN THRESHOLD

You *really* feel the pain when you are injured, to the point that even bruises can impair your performance from the way they ache. When you purchase this drawback, your Bruised and Injured conditions not only impose a penalty to your Toughness saves but also to *every* other check, save, or roll you make. For a value of 1, you only suffer a –1 penalty to your dice rolls when you have any number of Injured or Bruised conditions. For a value of 2, you suffer up to one third of the accumulated penalty. For a value of 3, you suffer up to half the accumulated penalty, and for a value of 4, you suffer the full

penalty. This penalty does not apply to recovery checks, and you only count the highest penalty between your Bruised and Injured conditions; they do not stack. This drawback may be a standard part of the rules in grittier, more realistic series, in which case, it doesn't give any bonus power points.

PART OF BODY

Only part of your body is affected by a specific power, such as the Alternate Form or Invisibility powers. For example, you might only receive a bonus to Toughness saves against abdominal attacks, possess the ability to turn your left arm invisible, or have bionic legs with Enhanced Strength. This drawback has a value of –1 if the body part is relatively large, such as one or more legs, one or more arms, the torso, or the entire head or –2 if it only affects a small body part such as a single hand, the face, or a foot.

PSYCHE BREAK

This is another popular application of Power Loss; you are unable to use the selected power unless you are in an extreme emotional condition. This drawback's value depends on how easy it is for you to enter this state (+1 for easy moods like happiness, mild depression, etc. to +3 for rare states like suicidal depression or homicidal rage) and how easy it is for you to self-induce the state with a Wisdom check (+0 for base DC 10, +1 DC 15, and +2 for DC 20). This value can be further modified if there are external ways to induce you into this state, such as medication, the Rage feat, or the Emotional Control power and if the hero has a psychological propensity for that mood. This drawback is usually tied to a complication that can induce the emotional state when presented.

RECURRING NIGHTMARES

You suffer from constant nightmares that haunt your dreams, tormenting you with scenes of your past or manifesting all your inner fears. Every night when you go to sleep, there is a chance that you'll suffer a nightmare. The following day you wake up fatigued and may not recover until you get a night of good sleep or by the use of certain powers, if the Gamemaster allows. This drawback's value depends on how likely it is for you to have a nightmare, as determined by a d20 roll, 2 for DC 15, 3 for DC 10, or 4 for DC 5. You can choose *not* to go to sleep, of course, but then it's a race between exhaustion and your stamina, with madness joining a bit later.

VISUALS

Knowing how your manga hero looks is just as important as determining what she can do. While colorful spandex is extremely rare, iconic wardrobe is essential for a manga hero. After all, if you are a ninja with unique training and personality, the last thing you want is to look like a generic black-pajama minion.

Consider the series' genre and mood to decide what your hero wears; armor from a fantasy medieval setting looks very different from sci-fi armor, even if both provide the same Toughness bonus. Videogames are an excellent source of distinctive character designs. Japanese and domestic publishers release many artbooks as tie-ins to popular series and/or authors, and most of them include a section with the characters' design sheets. Industry magazines also publish large illustrations and material from artbooks.

A hero's visuals include how her powers look, and this can be what makes many real series succeed or fail. A Blast power can be as simple as a column of white-hot chi energy, but it's a lot more appealing if the hero must perform a series of complicated hand gestures to channel her inner strength and fire off the chi blast. Sorcerers and magical knights can have ghostly symbols materialize around them, while cheesy super martial artists have their attack's name displayed in very big symbols.

Decide what each of your powers looks like when in use, and give good and vivid descriptions of it the first few times you use it. You can shorten up the description once everyone is familiar with it. After the 30th time a magical girl's transformation sequence flashes by the screen, seeing her clothes disappear is not as exciting anymore.

QUIRKS

Beyond drawbacks and complications, a manga hero can have a quirk or two that makes her stand out a little more. This is purely a role-playing detail, but memorable quirks can (and should) be rewarded with hero points, if they enrich the story or the game.

A hero's quirks can be anything, such as things she likes, wears, eats, says, or sings. They can have a solid basis in the hero's story or background, be based on existing traits, or can exist just to give more color to the series. Write down what quirks your hero has, so you can remember them and be consistent in playing them out whenever it's appropriate. Some examples of quirks for manga heroes include:

- A tough mercenary swordsman can have a soft spot for hot chocolate.
- A cat-girl idol singer ends every other phrase with a "-myu."
- An unlucky adventurer risks his life to save his favorite hat.
- The brave but naïve platoon leader raises her voice and gets carried away when speaking about honor.
- A short sorcerer flies off the handle whenever anyone mentions his height.
- A mousy and nerdy hacker girl has a secret collection of sexy lingerie.
- A jaded and battle-scarred soldier can't sleep in beds: he prefers to sleep under them.
- A heroine has deep philosophical arguments with her sentient sword, at inopportune times.
- The product-placement stickers a robot's builder forces him to wear embarrass him..
- A mecha pilot speaks in a disturbingly affectionate tone to his transformable fighter jet.
- The serious and competent detective lady has a beautiful singing voice but dislikes karaoke.
- The Death Goddess is a fan of romantic shoujo manga and sees nothing odd or wrong about it.
- A hero has unusual colored hair or a particular hairstyle that seems to hold up even in the face of explosions or powerful blasts of flame.
- A personal trinket (like an item of jewelry) has great sentimental and personal value to the character.
- The hero secretly keeps in touch with a beloved parent or other relative who thinks of him or her as ordinary.
- A dashing character has a "signature" left at a scene, from a playing card to a single rose.

CHAPTER 3: MECHA



You cannot have a manga-inspired game without talking about mecha. Giant robots became one of the most distinctive fixtures of Japanese comics and animation, and their long and illustrious history has allowed them to filter into practically every genre of manga and anime. Strictly speaking, the term "mecha" refers to anything large and mechanical, which would include a secret agent's car and star cruisers. However, vehicles are already sufficiently described, and they lack the coolness factor of bipedal fighting machines that can bash things with energy blades while showering missiles on the immediate surroundings. This chapter will help you to include mecha in your series, whether they are central to the story or just a nice addition.

THE MECHA GENRE

The first giant robot to have a pilot was the venerable Mazinger-Z, created by manga creator Go Nagai, in 1972. It was the first manga (and later anime) to feature a pilot and a support crew, although the mecha battles used a good share of its airtime.

Many robots followed Mazinger's example, and 1979 saw the birth of one of the most enduring sagas in manga and animation: *Mobile Suit Gundam*. Unlike Mazinger, whose pilot was an accessory in the fight against evil, the giant robots in Gundam were secondary to the people who drove the story. The lack of clear villains, and a morally ambiguous conflict, planted the seeds of most modern anime and paved the way for the debut of another mecha saga.

In 1982, the first episode of *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* took the public by surprise and became a huge hit. It featured the Valkyrie fighters, F-14 look-alikes that could transform into giant robots to the backdrop of a desperate war for mankind's survival.

The breakthrough these series made for the mecha genre was that they divested the giant robots from their implied special status. Whereas Mazinger was a unique device made by a genius, the Gundams and the Valkyries were prototypes or even common production models. Without the status of special device, the story was much less centered on the mecha and more on the people piloting them.

Macross had a second impact, in that it was the series that captured the attention of fans outside of Japan. Thanks to Carl Macek, who took *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* and, with some savage rewriting, re-editing, and stitching with two other series (*Super Dimension Cavalry Southern Cross* and *Genesis Climber Mospeada*), unleashed it upon American television as

Robotech, where it grew a fan base on its own to the point that there are novels, comics, and domestically produced sequels that respect the *Robotech* continuity instead of that of the parent series.

Skipping many other titles of note, including many, *many* sequels to both the Gundam and Macross sagas, the next giant robots to make it big were the Evangelion Units of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* in 1995. The technology of the Eva Units was so secondary to the esoteric plot and screwed-up character relationships that the series is plagued with continuity errors, depicting the Evangelions in different sizes from one episode to the next. Nonetheless, the series was a huge success, and the seed that *Robotech* planted, *Evangelion* nurtured.

We are due another big mecha hit, but so far the best series released have been dark horses with excellent artistic and technical qualities (*RahXephon, Vision of Escaflowne*), copycats *(Gasaraki, Sokyuu no Fafner, Sousei no Aquarion*), or sequels and remakes (*"Turn A" Gundam, Gundam Seed, Macross 7,* and *Macross Frontier*). Even *Tengen Toppa Gurren-Lagann* is so far limited to a cult phenomenon. All of these series have failed to capture the public as their predecessors did.

SUBGENRES

As products of advanced technology, mecha are the province of science fiction. However, the possibilities of that genre are as infinite as the universe its stories explore.

WAR DRAMAS

Basically, mecha are tanks with legs and the ability to pick up their own cannons from a rack, making them a natural element of war stories. As prototypes in the near future, the role of mecha are to revolutionize warfare, starting a new phase in the weapons race. In more advanced timelines, the mecha are fearsome machines of destruction, able to cruise space and replace jet fighters as elite weapon platforms. However, despite the machines' lethality, the keys to a successful mecha war drama are the soldiers behind the controls and the leaders behind the conflict.

- **Example:** The *Gundam* saga is the quintessential mecha war drama.

SPACE OPERAS

While mecha serve the same purpose in a space opera as in a war drama (that of war machines), they tend to be much fewer in number, and the character death count is significantly lower. Mecha in space opera may have capabilities that border on the magical, taking a stretch of the imagination to believe they are technological features, such as the plausibility of transforming robots in a battle.

- **Example:** The *Macross* saga plays closer to space opera tone, starting with its music-as-savior trope.

CYBERPUNK

Mecha in cyberpunk stories is just developing, with armor suits being more common than any other kind of mecha, although multi-legged tanks are not strange. Mecha weapons are oversized versions of police and military weapons, and the mecha are not very large.

- **Example:** While not strictly a mecha series, *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* features the Tachikoma sentient mecha tanks as part of Public Security Section 9.

AGAINST THE ALIENS

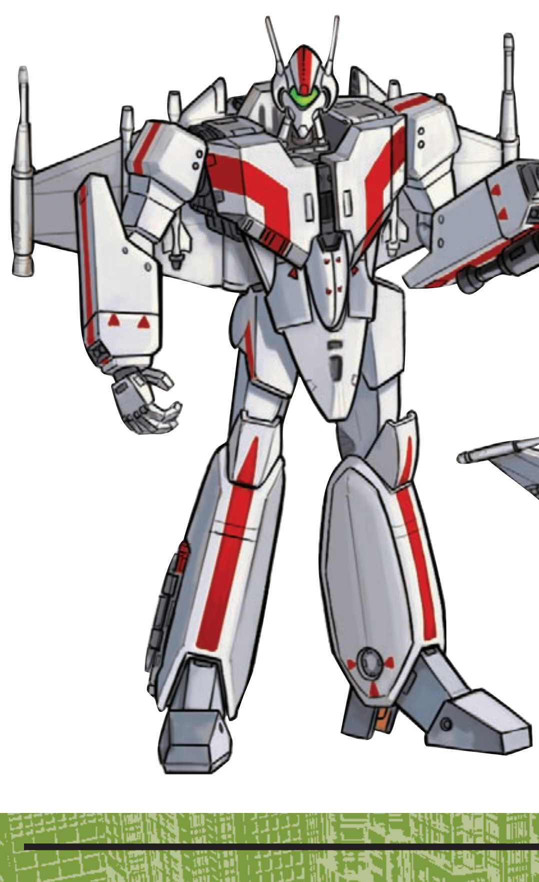
The most representative subgenre is the one that has a single or very few mecha defending humanity against alien beings. The robots truly earn the "giant" quality in this genre. Piloting these mecha is reserved to people chosen by destiny (or genetics, or the aliens themselves).

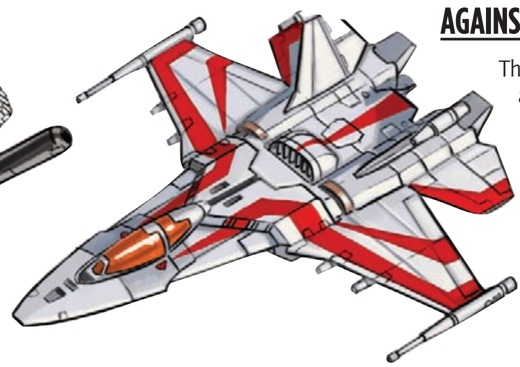
- **Example:** From *Mazinger* to *Evangelion*, there are many examples of giant robots fighting invaders.

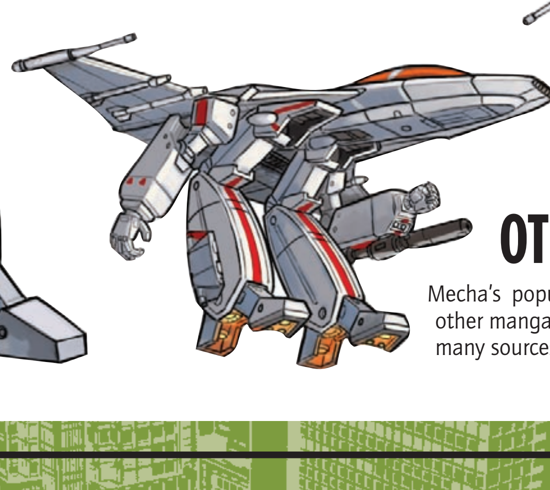
CRIME FIGHTERS

The mecha are tools to fight crime, possibly because they are part of a law enforcement agency's arsenal, but bounty hunting and vigilantism benefit greatly from having mecha, too. The mecha in this series are small, tending towards power armor rather than giant robots.

- **Example:** In *Patlabor*, the Labors are an accessory to the protagonist's police-work; humorous in the series, deadly serious in the movies.







AGAINST THE MAN!

The heroes are rebels with a cause, and their mecha is the only way their little resistance cell will resist the corrupted forces of the authorities they fight against. Such mecha always have something special, because they are a prototype of some secret technology that will give their pilot an edge against his enemies' regular version.

- **Example:** In *Magic Knight Rayearth*, the girls' giant mecha are all that stands between an evil sorcerer, his evil minions, and the destruction of the world of Zephyro.

OTHER GENRES

Mecha's popularity led inevitably to their appearance in other manga genres, as authors love to borrow things from many sources to keep manga and anime evolving.

MAGICAL GIRLS

Mecha in magical girl shows are colorful and part of the protagonists' power suites. They're mostly used to fight ultimate enemies, as the girls have their own powers to get them out of lesser problems.

FANTASY

Fantasy mecha are powered by magic and sport a much more baroque design, truly resembling Medieval or Renaissance suits of armor, only very, very large. Magical powers are not out of the question, but these mecha will prefer to emulate knights and use gigantic swords and maces. Fantasy mecha pilots can most assuredly summon their machines in times of need.

PET MONSTER

Mecha become pets in this type of series. The heroes ride their mecha rather than pilot them, and the machines are possessed of some sort of sentience and autonomy, although they are always subservient to their masters' calls.

HISTORICAL

Justifying mecha in the past requires an extra dose of suspension of disbelief, because while they work under the technology of the times, it makes for very interesting designs. Victorian mecha operate with steam power, Roman Imperial mecha may use Greek fire as fuel, and World War II might see mecha with diesel engines.

COMEDY

In straight comedies, mecha look silly and seldom work how they're supposed to. In parodies, the mecha look mysteriously like those of other series.

COMMON ELEMENTS

Each mecha series comes with its own assumptions as to how the mecha work, why they exist, and what is their role in the story. However, there are common elements to most of them, which you can use to create your own mecha series.

ALIEN INVADERS

From other planets, other timelines, other dimensions, or other states of being, strange invaders are attacking the Earth with varying degrees of success, and the mecha are the only things that stand between the attackers and total Earth domination. The aliens can be humanoid and open to diplomacy, humanoid but with a completely alien mindset, or gigantic monsters that cannot be bargained with.

COMRADESHIP AND RIVALRY

Pilots in a mecha squad form strong bonds, just like soldiers, and even more so in war dramas. Rivalries will certainly exist, and these can threaten the group if carried too far, just as friendship between pilots can save the day.

COOL BASE OF OPERATIONS

A secret base inside a mountain, an underground complex beneath the city, the latest in spacecraft carriers, or the lost zeppelin of a mad scientist—many mecha have a place to call home, and that place is not a boring old hangar. If portrayed well, though, a boring old hangar can bring much to a series' flavor.

DESTRUCTION

A mecha's fate is to be destroyed. In an epic story, the destruction is only temporary, as the hero's trusted ride is rebuilt in an improved version, but series that are more dramatic will destroy it permanently, along with its pilot. The common theme is that in one episode or another, the hero will have to do something without the support of his mecha's deadly tonnage.

MECHA ANCESTORS

While credit for the first piloted mecha in manga goes to Go Nagai, the first true humanoid war machines were conceived much closer to home, as the weapons suite that the Mobile Infantry used in the novel *Starship Troopers*, written by American author Robert Heinlein in 1959.

Heinlein's novel caused a lot of controversy for its militaristic bent, but its influence on science fiction is undeniable. Powered armor has become a staple of games, movies and, ultimately, it inspired the birth of the mecha genre in Japan, which closed the circle with the production and release of a *Starship Troopers* anime series in 1988. Returning the favor, the Wachowski brothers indiscriminately borrowed anime visuals and concepts (including mecha) in their Matrix film trilogy.

MAD SKILLS

The heroes are supposed to be extraordinarily good at piloting mecha, or they possess a one-of-a-kind ability that lets them triumph. Variations on this include the heroes' mentor or best friend being the one who possesses the mad skills.

PERSONAL DEATH

Unless the series is light-hearted, someone is going to die. The death of a friend or a mentor early on in the series will emphasize the point that things are serious. If the death happens later on, it underlines the importance of what the heroes are doing. Players who let their characters die in a heroic fashion should be allowed certain freedoms when creating their next character, but having the dead characters return is a big "no." In manga, heroes who die stay dead. Mostly.

A variation is "personal doom," which is similar, except that there *are* things worse than death.

PROTOTYPE DEVICES

Regardless of how tried and true the mecha's technology is in the setting, there is always room for improvement. Either the heroes' mecha are a prototype for a better, stronger model, or they get their hands on prototype weapons that can turn the tide of battle.

SENTIENCE

While not a very common element, there are still many instances where mecha are sentient, even if they allow themselves to be piloted. Mystical mecha can have a rudimentary spirit inside that communicates with the pilots, or prototype models might have a primitive intelligence that lets them understand the need to protect the little kid that holds their remote control. Maybe the AI in the computer system is the malicious type.

SHADOWY ORGANIZATIONS

When aliens invade the world, it usually falls to a world-spanning organization to recruit and train the pilots, as well as run combat operations. Sometimes the organization is truly devoted to the protection of humanity; more often than not, it has its own sinister agenda.

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Pilots are people, and people form ties with other people. The friends, family, and romantic interests of mecha pilots will come under the spotlight at some time, showing that the series is not simply about hunks of metal hitting each other.

STOLEN TECHNOLOGY

The heroes' side (or even humans in general) did not develop the mecha's technology on their own. They could have reverse-engineered a captured

alien or magical artifact, or they outright stole it from their creators and made modifications, so they can fight those very same creators.

TECHIES

The support crew of a mecha can play a small or large role in the story, but there will always be one or two scenes where a chief mechanic berates a pilot for beating up their baby during combat.

TEEN PILOTS

In normal warfare, no sane commander would trust such a powerful weapon as a mecha to a bratty teen, but somehow teenagers tend to be best suited to the task. Maybe the mecha's technology only allows raging hormones as a valid interface or the teen protagonists are not really normal people.

MECHA AND REALISM

Mecha already demand bending the rules of credibility, due to how impractical the construction and maneuverability of bipedal vehicles are with current technology, but a mecha series can tweak the realism meter depending on its genre, theme, and mood.

Realism not only affects descriptions and portrayals of mecha but also the rules used to play them. There are six areas that can be used to represent different levels of mecha realism: base technology, control interface, power source, equipment slots, powers, and the laws of physics.

BASE TECHNOLOGY

This is the basic technology that created the mecha. While this has little impact on the actual rules, a Gamemaster might decide that some base technologies are more expensive than others and increase a mecha's cost accordingly. Base technologies include but are certainly not limited to wooden, metallurgic (extant and exotic), memory metal, biologic, carbon composite, pure energy, virtual data, etc.

POWER SOURCE

The power source is what the mecha uses to power its movement. A mecha's plausibility depends tremendously on what makes it work, and how much a Gamemaster factors that into the story will set the realism of the series. In rules terms, a mecha's power source determines how much and for how long the heroes can use it, how much maintenance it needs, and how reliable it is in stressful situations. Typical power sources can include steam, internal combustion, nuclear reaction, a really long power cable attached to a power generator, an unidentified alchemical reaction, pure magic, the pilot's life-force, psychic potential, blood, or even souls.

CONTROL INTERFACE

The control interface determines how hard it is to control the mecha. The more agile a 300-ton machine is, and the fewer buttons and levers the pilots have to learn, the more it stretches disbelief. This is fairly easy to implement by setting requirements for Pilot skill ranks necessary to pilot mecha, as well as proficiency feats or requiring Pilot checks to perform certain maneuvers. A control interface can take many shapes such as levers and pulleys, ergonomic harnesses, control sticks, holographic instruments, or neural interface diadems.

EQUIPMENT SLOTS

How much equipment a mecha can hold is defined by its equipment slots. Equipment slots are also called "hardpoints" or "emplacements," and they are open locations where a mecha can store any equipment it can have, such as a cockpit package, a communication system,,or mounted weapons. Adding rules for equipment slots restricts the power and versatility of mecha as much as power level limits do, although they also add some bookkeeping.

POWERS

Just like characters, mecha can have almost any power listed in *Mutants & Masterminds* and any of its sourcebooks, justified by its base technology. The Gamemaster controls what powers are available as mecha systems, keeping a tight rein on what is possible and what is not. Examples include the Communication, Datalink, and Super-Senses powers for a mecha's comms and sensor systems, the Flight power as back-mounted booster packs, or Force Field as... a force field generator.

THE LAWS OF PHYSICS

Let's be honest. If you truly cared about the laws of physics, you wouldn't be coming up with a setting for a mecha game. However, increasing the science-to-fiction ratio can give any series a distinguishing touch. A space-traveling mecha series can take into account time dilation when traveling faster than light or consider that they can only walk on hard concrete because their weight sinks them on soft ground.

A mecha series' realism can be set in three open levels of realism. Note that the areas mentioned previously need not have a uniform level of realism; a fission-powered mecha can be controlled by a complex control interface and be made of mundane materials, or a magical mecha can run on the pilot's blood and be made of iron but packs an impressive array of powers. In general, flaws and drawbacks add realism to a mecha, even as they limit its functionality.

REALISTIC

A realistic level means that mecha are just what they look like: big, unwieldy hunks of metal. Their power source yields very little operational time, which narrows their range of operations. Controls are complex, requiring specialized training or a lot of raw talent to understand the controls. The biggest mecha are Large and cannot fit a lot of equipment, since most of their systems are devoted to keeping them upright. Many of them require minute and accurate maintenance. Their appearance is fairly utilitarian, with bulky limbs to provide proper balance and vehicle-like armor and implements. Heads are usually the emplacement for sensor equipment. Realistic mecha are highly advanced military prototypes and only available to very wealthy and resourceful organizations.

PLAUSIBLE

Plausible mecha make a few concessions but remain within the realm of what humans can achieve. The mecha function reliably, even if their operational range is still limited by their fuel. They can achieve speeds and ground maneuverability that rival all-terrain vehicles, and some even come with alternate modes of movement, like limited flight or rockets that give them the ability to high jump, in addition to all the systems a normal vehicle of their Tech Level takes for granted. They still need a lot of practice to master, but the controls are fairly intuitive. Plausible mecha are still a bit bulky, but they have a more recognizably humanoid shape, can go up to Huge size, and have agile limbs that can snap in any direction. Melee weapons are possible and even viable alternatives, as conventional war machines cannot respond in time to their fast changes in position and are defenseless in hand-to-hand.

INCREDIBLE

Incredible mecha work as if by magic (and some of them might use magic). Their power source is virtually inexhaustible, and pilots don't have to worry about sudden operational malfunctions. Weaponry is sophisticated, utterly destructive, and would suck the entire special effects budget of a small studio. Colossal, Gargantuan, and even Awesome sizes are available, as mecha can combine into greater machines or transform into other shapes. They are not only humanoid, but they have completely unnecessary faces on their heads. Incredible mecha may be impossible to control by the general populace, but a hero who falls into one's cockpit will intuitively know how to move it around, even if the controls consist only of a couple of levers and a large, red button.

MECHA TYPES

While constantly defying hard and fast classification, mecha can be grouped into a few categories based more on the flavor of their setting than their actual physical capabilities, which change from series to series.

POWER ARMOR

The smallest kind of mecha is actually more of a superpowered suit of armor. The main function of power armor is to make its wearer into a one-man (or –woman) army, elevating a simple human being into the ranks of supernatural or superhuman enemies. The weapons of power armor are mainly heavy weaponry available to unarmored soldiers, except that the power armor can use them as if they were much lighter weapons. Because of their relatively cheap and easy construction, power armors can easily be customized for the preferences of their individual users, such as a comms-armor equipped with advanced sensors and communications and melee-tuned suits that pack concussion gloves or monofilament cutting whips.

Magic fantasy armor can be considered power armor, as long as it comes with all sorts of powers that the user would not normally have except when wearing it and it encloses the character completely.

Power armor always stays in the range of Medium size, and users need not learn to do anything to operate them except move well.

- ***Example:*** *The hardsuits of* Bubblegum Crisis.

MOBILE SUIT

A step up from power armor, the mobile suit enters the category of vehicle. The pilot still controls the suit's limbs with his own body movements but mostly through a harness of pulleys and cogs or memory metal and servos. A mobile suit can have heavy weaponry mounted on its frame, as well as life support systems, which the pilot can control from more complex internal instruments.

Despite the increased bulk (the higher reaches of Medium and the lower of Large), a mobile suit can still handle tasks like an unarmored individual, and the suit can have hands capable of human-scale fine manipulation or oversized hands to hold oversized weapons and wrestle with tanks.

- ***Example:*** *The landmates of* Appleseed.

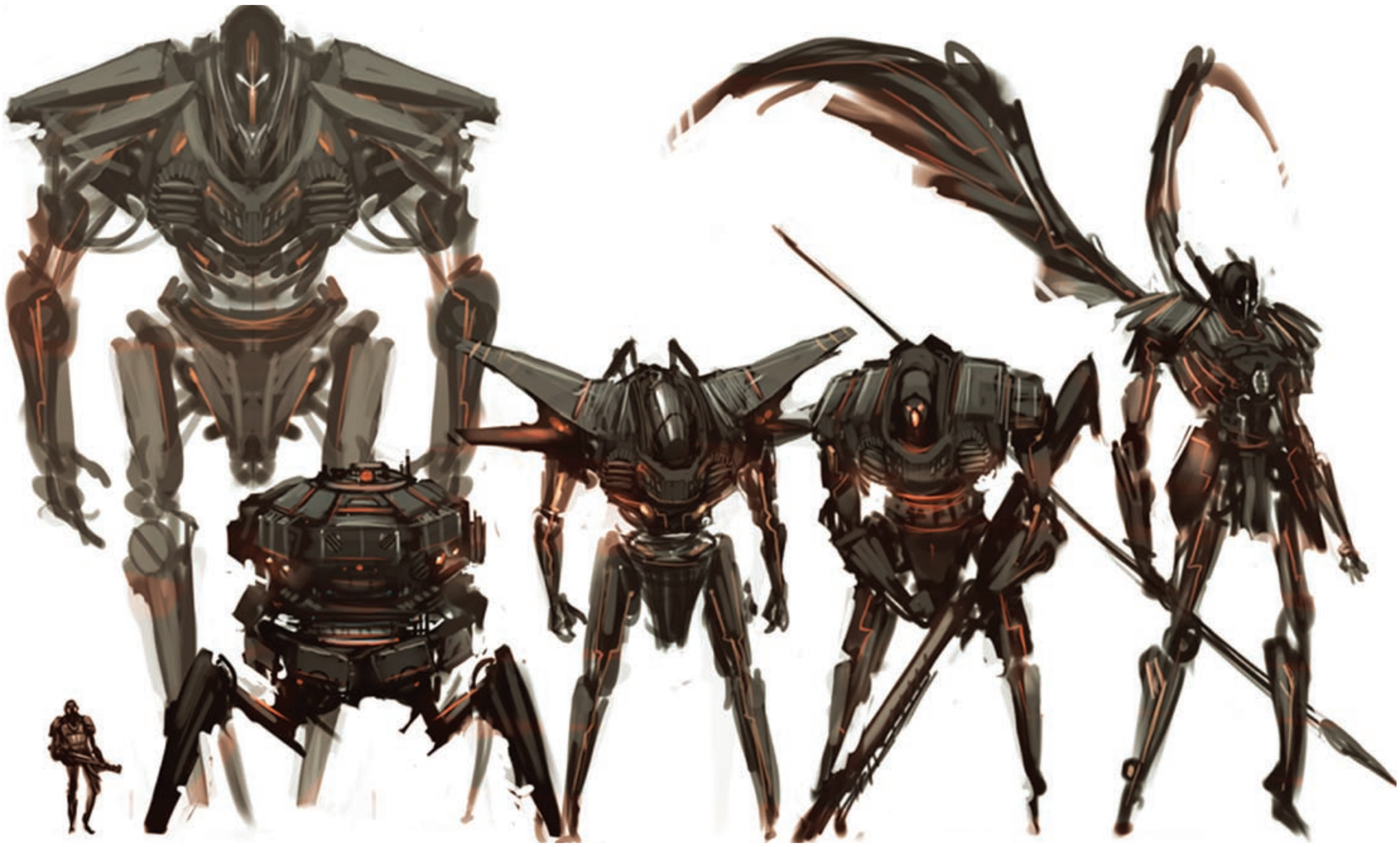
CRAFT

A craft mecha has as much value as a vehicle as it has as a humanoid machine. Hovering around the size of similar vehicles like jet fighters, space frigates, and tanks, craft mecha have advanced modes of travel as well as weaponry that takes advantage of their long range and versatility. Many craft mecha can transform or adopt different modes to optimize each of their various functions and purposes.

The crew of craft mecha consists of a single pilot and perhaps a copilot. Very few models exceed this number before becoming either special vehicles or other types of mecha.

The arsenal of craft mecha is very diverse, combining mounted options like shoulder missile launchers with weapons wielded with one or both of the mecha's hands. The melee weapons wielded by craft mecha can slice vehicles in half, although given their mobility, most of these equip ranged attack options if their base technology allows it.

- ***Example:*** *The mobile suits of the* Gundam *saga*.



GIANT ROBOT

As the name implies, these mecha are robots several stories high. While this size would make them ideal weapon platforms, they are oddly lacking in most forms of weaponry except a couple of energy weapons and maybe missiles of some sort. Otherwise, they are built to fight same-scaled enemies hand-to-hand. Some will have melee weaponry designed for their size.

A giant robot's crew may consist of a single pilot or up to five, which is most often the case if the giant robot is actually an amalgam of smaller mecha combined together, with the individual pilots become the bridge's crew.

There can be cases like the Macross SDF-1, which was actually an interplanetary colony ship that could assume a semi-humanoid form in order to fire its devastating main weapon, but otherwise its mobility was very limited.

- ***Example:*** The Eva Units from *Neon Genesis Evangelion.*

GESTALT

A gestalt mecha is a component of a larger, more massive mecha. The number of elements varies from a mere two to a couple of dozen, depending on the final size and purpose of the composite mecha. A gestalt element mecha often has the transformable type, too, having one natural form in which it operates individually and its form as a part of a greater whole.

- ***Example:*** *The components of* Voltron.

GUARDIAN

A mecha with a special purpose and some glimmer of self-awareness is a guardian. Guardian mecha tend to have a mythical nature and capabilities outside the experience of science and technology. Whether they can be piloted or ridden, they have a special link to their masters and may even grant a few powers through that link.

- ***Example:*** *The Mashin of* Magic Knight Rayearth.

SPIDER MECHA

While most mecha have a humanoid design, the multi-legged approach has many advantages, mainly in balance and stability. Spider mecha are not humanoid at all; their design principle is to put legs on a more conventional vehicle in order to circumvent difficult terrain and the jostling movement that messes up aiming. They come in any size, from small infiltration units barely the size of a van to gigantic weapon platforms that are, for all purposes, walking fortresses.

Example: *The giant walking weapon batteries from the* Appleseed *OVA or first CGI movie*.

TRANSFORMABLE

A subtype that can apply to other types, the transformable mecha has an alternate form that it can assume by mostly mechanical means, although magic and space-bending are not unheard of. A mecha can transform into a normal vehicle of another type or into a mechanized beast. It can have different modes of combat in each of its different forms. In some forms, the pilot may be expelled as the mecha operates on its own artificial (or magical) intelligence. This type of mecha is easily represented by the Mechamorph feature, described in this chapter.

- ***Example:*** *The Valkyries of the* Macross *saga.*

WALKER

This mecha is basically a tank with legs and possibly arms. The simplest models are nothing more than a platform to carry a single large weapon or weapon array, more versatile than a conventional vehicle but not as much as a humanoid mecha. Walkers hardly ever use hand-held weapons, sporting instead an impressive arsenal of mounted weaponry. Cheap walkers are actually operated remotely or by an artificial intelligence, since they are little more than walking artillery. In settings where the mecha are in their early stages of development, walkers may be the only models available.

- ***Example:*** *The HAVWC (High Agility Versatile Weapon Carrier) of* FLAG.

CREATING MECHA

There is no secret behind creating a mecha for your series. Mecha have most of the traits heroes can have, and they can be bought at the same costs. The difference is that mecha are not heroes (most of the time... there are mecha that are simply not what meets the eye), but rather accessories for the heroes to do their stuff.

In most mecha series, heroes are limited by what a regular (if extraordinarily skilled) human can do, which makes fighting giant aliens rather difficult. A hero can spend all those power points he cannot raise over his humanity's limits in a mecha, purchasing it either as equipment or as a Device, with the limitations and characteristics each option entails.

To create a mecha, follow these steps:

- **Select Size:** A mecha's size determines its initial cost, as well as the starting values of its base traits.
- **Increase Base Traits:** You can increase a mecha's Strength, Dexterity, and Toughness directly.
- **Purchase Cockpit and Control Features:** Add base systems and features that increase the pilot's control of the mecha, as well as his protection from the environment.
- **Purchase Movement Features:** In addition to just walking, a mecha can be made to fly, roll, or even travel through space.
- **Purchase Sensory and Communications Features:** The pilot is isolated in a mecha's cockpit; these systems allow him to perceive his environment and communicate with his allies.
- **Purchase Defense and Countermeasure Features:** A mecha is already an impressive protection for its pilot; these base systems and features make that protection all that more impregnable.
- **Purchase Targeting System Features:** To increase a mecha's effectiveness in combat, you can add base systems and features that allow him to hit better and more often.
- **Purchase Miscellaneous Features:** Add unique and utilitary capabilities to the mecha, taking it beyond the original specs.
- **Choose Drawbacks:** For a drop of realism, or simply to tone down a mecha's power, choose drawbacks that represent less-than-optimal performance.
- **Purchase Weapon Systems:** Give the mecha its offensive capabilities, which can range from oversized melee weapons to advanced energy weaponry.
- **Calculate Costs:** Add the costs of size, increased traits, base systems, and features. Add +4 for every TL by which the base systems exceed the setting's, and +2 for every TL for complementary systems. Subtract

MECHA SIZES

SIZE	Height	Weight	Space	Speed	Crew	Reach	Examples
Awesome	128 ft. or more	3 mil lbs+	40 ft	55 ft	1-50	20 ft.	Transformable colony ships
Colossal	64-128 ft.	2-3 mil lbs	30 ft	50 ft	1-25	15 ft.	Truly giant robots, composite mecha
Gargantuan	32-64 ft.	250K-2 mil lbs	20 ft	45 ft	1-10	15 ft.	Giant robots, guardians, great war machines
Huge	16-32 ft.	32K–250K lbs	15 ft	40 ft	1-5	10 ft.	Guardians, small war machines
Large	8-16 ft.	4K-32K lbs	10 ft	35 ft	1-2	10 ft.	Light war machines, mobile suits
Medium	4-8 ft.	500-4,000 lbs	5 ft.	30 ft.	1	5 ft.	Power armor

MECHA SIZE TRAITS

SIZE	HANDLING MODIFIER	BASE STRENGTH	BASE TOUGHNESS	GRAPPLE MODIFIER	STEALTH MODIFIER	CARRYING CAPACITY	POINT COST
Awesome	–12	50 (+20)	+10	+20	–20	+25 Str	61
Colossal	–8	42 (+16)	+8	+16	–16	+20 Str	49
Gargantuan	–4	34 (+12)	+6	+12	–12	+15 Str	37
Huge	–2	26 (+8)	+4	+8	–8	+10 Str	25
Large	–1	18 (+4)	+2	+4	–4	+5 Str	13
Medium	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0 Str	0

the cost of drawbacks. Decide whether the mecha is considered equipment or a Device to designate the real cost for the Equipment feat or the Device power.

COST

Calculate a mecha's cost by adding all of its traits, from size to features, and subtracting the value of its drawbacks. The listed costs are expressed in "mecha points," only used to purchase a mecha's traits, features, weapons, and drawbacks until a final cost is calculated.

In series where the mecha are normal vehicles, measure the final cost in equipment points, which can be purchased with the Equipment feat. In series where the mecha are unique, the final cost is expressed in full power points that can be purchased with the Device power.

When designing a mecha series, you must decide whether the mecha are equipment or Devices. The former are much cheaper to purchase than the latter. To be considered equipment, mecha must be common in the setting, produced by regular production processes, easily available, and packing capabilities that could be available through other pieces of equipment. Once a mecha is considered "special," the mecha is considered a Device.

A setting can combine both kinds of mecha: those considered equipment are infantry, while those that are Devices are the cavalry.

> ***Example:*** *In the fantasy series Vision of Escaflowne, there are two kinds of mecha in a world with a Renaissance-level of technology: the Melefs, which operate through harnesses of cogs and pulleys and depend a lot on the physical strength of their pilot, and the Guymelefs, which derive their power from gems called "energists," extracted from the hearts of dragons. Pilots also control Guymelefs with harnesses, but the mecha are much more responsive, which means they can be larger, stronger, and more agile. The title mecha, Escaflowne, is also an ancient artifact that can bond with Van Fanel, its pilot, enhancing his combat prowess but also inflicting on his body the damage it suffers on its armor plates. Melefs are equipment, while Guymelefs are Devices.*

MECHA TRAIT COST

TRAIT	COST
Size	See **Mecha Size Traits** table
Ability Score	1 point per +1
Base Systems	1 point per rank (See **Mecha Features**)
Complementary Systems	1 point per 5 ranks (See **Mecha Features**)
Tech Level Difference	2 or 4 points per TL per feature

COSTS AND TECH LEVEL

All the features have a Tech Level listing. This Tech Level is the same as that explained in **Chapter 1: Worlds of Manga** and is the minimum level of scientific progress a setting must develop to consider that feature feasible. Note how many features exceed the setting's TL. If a base system exceeds the setting's TL, add 4 mecha points per TL of difference; if a complementary system exceeds the setting's TL, add 2 points per TL of difference. Apply this extra cost for every system that surpasses the setting's TL.

MECHA TRAITS

Like creating your hero, creating a mecha is a lot easier if you have a firm idea of what it can do and what role it will play in your series.

NAME AND TYPE

First, you have to decide upon the mecha's concept. Is it a small and agile power suit? A gigantic machine that can step on cities? Is *it* a city? Is it made of super-advanced metallic alloys? Wood? Is it actually an organism encased beneath metal plates? What do you see the mecha doing? It can go hand to hand against its foes wielding a plasma blade or just act as a channel to your own powers. Once you have decided on a general concept, give it a name that reflects it. If the mecha is going to be the concept behind the series, then that name will also be the name of the series (with some awk-

wardly added adjectives and nouns). A production model's name will share its designation with every other mecha from the same line, while a mecha crafted out of ectoplasm according to your own dreams and nightmares will have a name that is personal to you.

COCKPIT

By default, a mecha's cockpit has enough space for the accommodations and control interface for one person: its pilot. You can increase this by purchasing additional cockpit space as a feature. A mecha's default control interface is fully intuitive, regardless of technology; you can move it as you move your own body, without the need for particular feats. As discussed earlier, you can add realism to your mecha series by making the mecha harder to understand, using the Control Requirements mecha drawback. A pilot inside the mecha's cockpit has total concealment and is immune to most effects outside the mecha, thanks to the cockpit's hermetic seals. Both these features can be changed with the Exposed Cockpit drawback.

SIZE

A mecha can go from Medium to Awesome in size. Medium mecha can only be power armor and mobile suits (power armor should be the same size as its wearer), Large mecha are typically mobile suits or craft mecha, and Huge and larger can be just about anything.

A mecha's size imposes certain modifiers as mentioned on page 34, **Size**, in *Mutants & Masterminds,* with a few adaptations; the attack and defense modifier is treated as a handling modifier (see later). In addition, a mecha's size also limits the number of its crewmembers and the optional rules for slots. A mecha's size allows it to wield very large weapons as if they were two- and one-handed or light.

The cost in power points for each mecha size, as well as other modifiers, is listed in the **Mecha Size Traits Table**.



HANDLING

A mecha's handling represents how hard it is to perform certain actions with it. This is a penalty defined by the mecha's size, but a high Dexterity and mecha drawbacks like Hard Controls can modify this for better or worse. A mecha's handling applies to attack and initiative rolls, to Defense, and to Acrobatics, Climb, and Pilot checks. See **Using Mecha** later in this chapter for details on when to use the skills that handling modifies. Regardless of handling, a mecha's hands are naturally clumsy, designed only to grab and squeeze. Pilots who want to pick up hapless maidens without crushing them to death should either purchase the Precise power feat and assign it to their Pilot skill or fly a mecha with the Precise Handling feature.

ABILITIES

Mecha have a base Strength score dependent on its size and a base Dexterity score of 10. You must increase a mecha's abilities individually to provide them with surplus physical power.

- *Strength:* When piloting a mecha, the hero uses the mecha's Strength instead of his own. Medium mecha have no base Strength, so they use the wearer's Strength and augment it with the Enhanced Strength power. You can reduce the mecha's Strength in order to gain a mecha point to use to purchase something else.
- *Dexterity:* A mecha's Dexterity modifier represents how efficient its control and motor mechanisms are. The mecha's Dexterity bonus cancels out its handling modifier, but the modifier cannot rise any higher than a net +0 handling; the rest of the mecha's maneuverability rests on the pilot. A Large mecha needs a Dexterity 12 score to offset its handling penalty, for example.
- *Constitution:* As constructs, mecha don't have a Constitution score. Mecha always fail Constitution checks and do not recover from damage; they must be repaired instead (see **Using Mecha** at the end of this chapter). Mecha are immune to effects requiring Fortitude saving throws, unless the effect works on inanimate objects.
- *Mental Abilities:* A mecha has no Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma scores, as it's basically a vehicle. However, these can be purchased separately from 0 to represent a guardian mecha's spirit or an A.I. operating system, in which case they follow the rules for constructs.

TOUGHNESS

A mecha's Toughness save represents the hardiness of its construction, expressed in a base Toughness save bonus. This starting bonus represents the mecha's chassis, not its armor, and it cannot be increased any further. Armor *can* be purchased independently, along with other defensive systems, through the Force Field, Shield, and Protection powers. When damaged, a pilot uses the mecha's Toughness save instead of his own, unless the mecha has the Damage Feedback drawback. Power armor is an exception once more; its Toughness is a bonus to the wearer's own, stacking normally with bonuses derived from Constitution, feats, and the pilot's defensive powers.

SPEED

Mecha move like heroes do on foot and can choose to move at a normal, accelerated, or all out pace. As machines, though, mecha do not get tired from moving all out for extended periods, so they do not make Constitution checks to keep running unless they have the Inefficient Power Source drawback. Accelerated and all-out pace can impose penalties on the mecha's handling (see **Maneuvering Skills** near the end of this chapter). Mecha quite often have alternate methods of movement, but those are purchased as additional systems equivalent to the Flight and Super-Movement powers. Pilots with movement powers of their own cannot use them in a mecha, although there are features that offer alternatives.

FEATURES

A mecha's features are its special abilities. A mecha's features are classified as base or complementary systems. A base system is the minimum advantage a feature of its kind can offer, and in many cases, this is the default for any mecha model. Complementary systems are "feats" that improve, enhance, or expand the base system's functionality.

Mecha systems can include ejector seats, communications and basic sensor systems, life support, living quarters, etc. More advanced systems include any feature that uses powers from *Mutants & Masterminds* to determine their effects.

You can find the classification of a mecha's features, their equivalences and costs in the **Mecha Features** section later in this chapter.

COMBAT

This is a mecha's combat capabilities. A mecha cannot attack on its own and uses its pilot's attack and defense bonuses, applying them to the mecha's forms of attack. A mecha may have features that grant bonuses to the pilot's combat traits, such as targeting systems or improved defensive maneuverability.

DRAWBACKS

The default values for mecha assume a level of realism previously defined as "incredible." Adding drawbacks to the mecha not only reduces its power point cost but also injects a little more realism by introducing design flaws and inherent weaknesses into a mecha's performance. A mecha can purchase almost all the drawbacks listed in *Mutants & Masterminds*, and the **Mecha Drawbacks** section adds a few more options and examples.

MECHA FEATURES

A mecha's technology base allows it to equip several advantages in the form of features. These features are classified into general categories, according to their functionality.

A feature's description includes a generic name, followed by a note identifying the feature as a base or complementary system, plus its cost in points. Some features are ranked, just as skills, feats, and powers, in which case the cost applies to a single rank.

- **Base Systems:** A base system is a feature that is the cornerstone of the mecha's functionality. Each rank in a base system costs one mecha point.
- **Complementary Systems:** These features modify how a base system works or represent systems that are usually taken for granted when designing a mecha. Five ranks in a complementary system cost one mecha point.

COCKPIT AND CONTROLS

The standard cockpit in a mecha fits one pilot and gives him access to all of the mecha's control systems. Depending on the mecha's design, the pilot might be vertical or horizontal, facing up or facing down. You should also determine where the cockpit access is (and for cool special effects, how the mecha opens the hatch), such as from the front, as the chest plate or a clear lid opens to reveal the seat, from the back, through insertion of a control module, etc. Getting in and out of a mecha is a full action, which can be made longer through the Action drawback. Depending on the mecha's base technology, the controls can be anything from a body harness and mystic orbs to a collection of control sticks or neural electrodes. A base cockpit protects the pilot from attacks and Instant effects that target the mecha, but it's not sealed and does not protect against environmental conditions. The basic seat is considered a base system that is already included in the mecha's cost.

UNDER THE HOOD: FEATS AS FEATURES

Many features reproduce the effects of feats. A mecha with such a feature grants its benefit to the pilot, but the pilot does not gain the feat per se; he only enjoys its benefit while inside the mecha. You can create new features out of existing feats, classifying them under one of the feature categories listed.

EJECTOR SEAT (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2, 1 POINT PER RANK)

If the mecha is in danger of being destroyed, you can escape from it safely. You activate the ejector seat as a reaction. When you eject, you are launched in a random direction away from the mecha, as if you had five ranks in the Leaping power. Purchasing this feature equips an ejection system on all seats in the mecha (as per the Extra Seat feature). Each additional rank in this feature can increase the distance the seat is launched as if obtaining an additional rank in Leaping, or it can purchase the Flight Systems, Environmental Seal, or Electromagnetic Seal features for the Ejector Seat only (all as complementary systems that apply to all the seats in the mecha).

ELECTROMAGNETIC SEAL (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

This feature expands an Environmental Seal to protect the pilot from extreme, energy-based environmental conditions like radiation, cosmic rays, and others usually found in space, alien dimensions, and the like. Each extra rank protects the crew from either one rank of Insubstantial (up to 4) or a specific Perception-range effect (named; for example: the psychic storm power, not a Blast [Area, Perception Range]).

ENVIRONMENTAL SEAL (BASE, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The cockpit can be hermetically sealed to protect the crew from environmental conditions. The crew gains Immunity to suffocation and all environmental conditions found in an atmosphere (even alien atmospheres) for 5 hours, after which the air runs out and the crew starts to suffocate unless they open the seals to let the atmosphere enter (hopefully harmless at the time). Each additional rank increases the time the cockpit can remain sealed one step up on the **Time and Value Progression Table**. At 10 ranks, rather than lasting 100 years, the Environmental Seal instead becomes a full, perpetual, and autonomous life support system.

EXTRA SEAT (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 1, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha has room for extra crew, limited by the mecha's size (see the **Mecha Size Traits Table**). Each rank in this feature increases the number of extra crew seats one step up on the **Time and Value Progression Table**.

IMPROVED CONTROL INTERFACE (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 1, 1 POINT)

This system makes a mecha easier to handle in sudden maneuvers, granting a +4 bonus to initiative checks. Unlike the equivalent Improved Initiative feat, a mecha can gain this feature only once, but it stacks with all of the pilot's initiative bonus.

IMPROVED LIMB CONTROL (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 1, 1 POINT)

This feat links the controls of the mecha's off-hand to the main control interface, granting you the Ambidexterity feat when using weapons or items in the mecha's off-hand.

NEURAL/SPIRIT INTERFACE (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 5, 2 POINTS PER RANK)

Rather than forcing you to use clumsy controls, the mecha's systems interface directly with your mind, literally making the mecha feel like it's your body. Instead of using Pilot to control the mecha, you use any other skill

MECHA FEATURES

SYSTEM	TYPE	TECH LEVEL	COST
Cockpit and Controls			
Ejector Seat	complementary	TL 2	1 /rank
Electromagnetic Seal	complementary	TL 3	1 /rank
Environmental Seal	base	TL 3	1 /rank
Extra Seat	complementary	TL 1	1 /rank
Improved Control Interface	complementary	TL 1	1 point
Improved Limb Control	complementary	TL 1	1 point
Neural/Spirit Interface	complementary.	TL 5	2 /rank
Precise Handling	base	TL 1	1 point
Movement Modes			
All-Terrain	complementary	TL 2	1 /rank
Escape Thrusters	complementary	TL 3	5 points
Flight Systems	base	TL 4	2 /rank
Free-bearing Hip Joint	complementary	TL 2	2 /rank
Ground Speed	base	TL 1	1 /rank
Improved Leg Actuators	complementary	TL 2	1 /rank
Jump Rockets	base	TL 3	1 /rank
Multipede	base	TL 1	1 /rank
Underground Speed	base	TL 2	1 /rank
Water Speed	base	TL 2	1 /rank
Zero-G Thrusters	complementary	TL 4	1 point
Sensors and Communications			
Advanced Onboard Computer System	base	TL 3	1 /rank
Base Comms	complementary	TL 2-3	1 /rank
Base Sensors	complementary	TL 2-3	1 /rank
Datalink	complementary	TL 3	1 /rank
Profile DataBase	complementary	TL 3	1 point
Profile Entry	complementary	TL 3	1 /rank
Recording Equipment	complementary	TL 2	1 point

SYSTEM	TYPE	TECH LEVEL	COST
Defense and Countermeasures			
Armor	base	TL 1	1 /rank
Autonomous Defensive Actuators	complementary	TL 2	1 /rank
Cloak System	base	TL 4	2 /rank
Countermeasures	complementary	TL 3	1 /rank
Decoy Projection Module	complementary	TL 3	1 point
Emergency System Shutdown	base	TL 3	1 point
Improved Plating	base	TL 3	1 /rank
Jamming	complementary	TL 3	1 /rank
Reactive Armor	complementary	TL 3	3 /rank
Reactive Camouflage	base	TL 4	1 point
Shield Generator	base	TL 4	1 /rank
Targeting System			
Identify-Friend-or-Foe Transponder	complementary	TL 3	1 point
Optical Tracking	base	TL 4	1 point
Pinpoint Accuracy System	complementary	TL 4	1 /rank
Target Tracking Interface	base	TL 3	1 /rank
Miscellaneous			
Cargo Space	complementary	TL 1	1 /rank
Channel (Trait)	base	TL 1	1 /rank
Composite	base	TL 5	1 /rank
Environmental Optimization	complementary	TL 2	1 or 2 / rank
(Equipment) Mount	complementary	TL 1-3	1-3 points
Hidden Mount	complementary	TL 2	1 point
Improved System Processor	complementary	TL 3	1 point
Mechamorph	base	TL 4	1 point
Passengers/Crew Quarters	complementary	TL 1	1 point
Plug-In Interface	base	TL 3	1 point
Support Units	base	TL 3	1 /rank

classified as a maneuvering skill (see **Mecha Combat**). If you have physical Movement powers, like Leaping, Speed, or Flight, an additional rank in this feature allows you to use one of them through the mecha. For Super-Movement, you need one rank in this feature for each movement category (which must be a physical movement, unlike Dimensional and Permeate); otherwise, a single Neural/Spirit Interface enables all ranks in a pilot's movement power.

PRECISE HANDLING (BASE, TL 1, 1 POINT)

A mecha's hands lack the finesse to perform exact manipulations other than grabbing and tossing things about or grabbing a weapon and firing it. This feature enhances the response from the hand's servos, allowing the mecha to perform tasks that require precision, such as opening a base or a mecha's hatch. This is the Precise power feat, applied to the mecha's hands.

MOVEMENT MODES

Many mecha have alternate movement modes in addition to just walking, such as tracked boots, jump rockets, or even full flight systems. Switching to an alternate movement mode is a move action, which can be increased with the Action drawback and counts as a transformation for the purpose of gaining the One-Way Transformation drawback. A mecha can have alternate movement modes as part of the Mechamorph feature, but it's only available in the mecha's alternate form.

THE FINAL FRONTIER: SPACE TRAVEL

Like any hero or Device, a mecha can be equipped with space-travel technology through the Space Travel power, using hyperspace drives, warp engines, or any sort of technology that allows it to surpass the speed of light. The Teleportation power can simulate jump technology or "fold," as it's called in the Macross saga. However, a spacefaring mecha must have both the Environmental Seal and Electromagnetic Seal features, or the pilot will blow up like popcorn (so to speak) if his unprotected mecha is exposed to hard vacuum and cosmic radiation.

Very few mecha have any sort of autonomy for space missions, though, depending on specialized carriers or dropships to take them where they need to be.

ALL-TERRAIN (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha's legs and soles are built with a particular terrain in mind, such as ski-like feet for snow, active counterbalance and crampons for steep hills, etc. This feature acts as the Environmental Adaptation, eliminating the penalties for moving in a particular type of difficult terrain. Each rank adds a different terrain to the mecha's capabilities.

ESCAPE THRUSTERS (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 5 POINTS)

This is a disposable thruster pack capable of reaching escape velocity, taking a mecha that wears it into space. The escape thrusters fall back down to Earth after doing their job, and they can be reused. This system is meant for mecha without the necessary ranks in Flight Systems to escape an atmosphere (whatever planet the atmosphere belongs to), as determined by the GM. In a realistic setting, the mecha must have Flight Systems 11 in order to fly out of Earth's atmosphere under its own power (as Earth's escape velocity is just under 25,000 mph) or hitch a ride on an orbital shuttle; in series with more fiction than science, this speed requirement can be ignored.

FLIGHT SYSTEMS (BASE, TL 4, 2 POINTS PER RANK)

With any combination of rocket packs and wings, the mecha is able to fly as per the **Flight** power on page 85 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. A 1-point drawback reduces the mecha's maximum altitude to the distance on the **Extended Range Table** (page 69 of *Mutants & Masterminds*) equal to the feature's rank.

FREE-BEARING HIP JOINT (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2, 2 POINTS PER RANK)

The mecha can rotate its hip joints 360 degrees. This has two effects: the mecha can react to the actions of all enemies around it, negating the bonus from an aid action by a single opponent, and the mecha can get back to its feet after falling prone, without the need of a maneuvering skill check (see the **Using Mecha** section). Additional ranks can increase the number of enemies whose aid bonus is negated at the same time by one, up to eight or the mecha's Dexterity bonus, whichever is lower, or they can reduce the action a mecha needs to get up from prone to a free action.

GROUND SPEED (BASE, TL 1, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha's legs can lock into speed mode and run faster than normal, or its feet are equipped with wheels or tracks that extend and retract as needed. Assign a mecha's alternate ground velocity using the **Speed** power on page 100 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. This feature is considered an alternate movement mode for the purposes of other pilot or mecha traits.

IMPROVED LEG ACTUATORS (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha's legs work more efficiently. Increase the mecha's base speed by 10 feet for every rank in this feature.

JUMP ROCKETS (BASE, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha is equipped with a short-lived jet pack, with exhausts placed on its back, legs, or feet. These allow the mecha to jump great distances, as per the **Leaping** power on page 90 of *Mutants & Masterminds*.

MULTIPEDE (BASE, TL 1, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha has an extra leg. Each extra rank increases the number of extra legs by one step up the **Time and Value Progression Table.** Most mecha will have a maximum of 8 legs. A mecha with more than two legs gains a +4 bonus to resist being knocked down or pushed back by any attack or effect that might do so and a +1 bonus per extra leg to Acrobatics, Climb, or Pilot checks to keep the mecha upright on uneven terrain.

UNDERGROUND SPEED (BASE, TL 2, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha can compact its limbs and use a variety of methods to dig itself through solid earth, be it a series of drills and gears along its arms or a couple of superheated generators that melt rock away. The mecha gains an underground speed as per the **Burrowing** power on page 77 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. This feature is considered an alternate movement mode for the purposes of other pilot or mecha traits.

WATER SPEED (BASE, TL 2, 1 POINT PER RANK)

Most mecha sink like a rock when dropped in water, but a model with this feature is able to attain great speeds on the water's surface, as per the **Swimming** power on page 105 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. You can devote a rank of this feature to make the mecha buoyant; that is, it can float on liquid surfaces. If you wish the mecha to have submarine capabilities, you must also give it the Environmental Seal feature. This feature is considered an alternate movement mode for the purposes of other pilot or mecha traits.

ZERO-G THRUSTERS (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 4, 1 POINT)

Add this feature to a mecha's Flight Systems to allow it to maneuver in space, canceling the normal –4 penalty to attack rolls and skill checks by adding compensatory mini-thrusters in strategic locations. This doesn't allow a mecha to fly at faster-than-light speeds.

SENSORS AND COMMUNICATIONS

In planes, these systems are known as "avionics," representing the mecha's ability to sense and communicate remotely. The most rudimentary sensor and communications equipment are the trusty Eyeball Mark I and a set of speakers or amplifiers that allow the pilot to talk with others in the immediate surroundings.

ADVANCED ONBOARD COMPUTER SYSTEM (BASE, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

This feature grants a lot of flexibility to a pilot, providing access to different systems in more ways than the simple, preexisting interface displays of ordinary sensor and comms equipment. An onboard computer allows you to decode encrypted communications (i.e. those with a single Subtle rank), manage and analyze sensor logs, perform on-board maintenance and jury-rigging from the pilot's seat, etc. Each rank in this feature grants a +2 bonus to Computers checks to operate any of the mecha's linked systems (not limited by PL) or represents 1 rank in the Quickness power related only to computer tasks (choose when purchasing, as it represents hardwired capabilities). A mecha can have a maximum number of ranks in this feature equal to 1 + setting's TL. For supernatural, rather than technological mecha, the computer can be a bound spirit, a budding soul, or a single powerful crystal ball.

UNDETECTABLE COMMS

Adding two ranks of the Subtle power feat makes a communications frequency undetectable by any sensor array. In technological terms, this can be interpreted as a random frequency hopper (TL 3) that switches the frequency of a signal at random intervals, wavelengths, and intensities so that no scanner can pick it up, or it can be entangled quantum particles (TL 5) that are completely undetectable. A receiver must be keyed to the transmitter for the communication to patch through successfully. If the communications are based on psychic powers or signals, being undetectable can be a default function of such systems, but it must still be paid for with the power feat.

SENSORS AND SUPER-SENSES

The Super-Senses power includes a number of sense characteristics and additional senses that a mecha's sensor system can include, interpreted as a number of technologies:

accurate (active detection), **acute** (increased sensor sensitivity or microwave frequency), **extended** and **radius** (improved sensor settings and coverage), **awareness** (passive signal detection), **danger sense** (countermeasures' sensor), **detect** (active specialized scanners), **direction** and **distance sense** (navigation system), **low-light** and **microscopic vision** (light-enhancement visors), **radio** (wide-spectrum signal scanner), **time sense** (multi-purpose timer), **tracking** (residual heat sensor), **tremorsense** (vibration sensors), **ultra-hearing** and **ultravision** (extended frequency for pre-existing scanners), **x-ray vision** (microwave/x-ray scanner).

If the chosen frequency is an accurate sense, you don't need to make routine Computers checks to find a target without concealment to that sense; the mecha's instruments pinpoint its location automatically for the pilot.

BASE COMMS (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2-3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

Assemble your mecha's comms system using the Communication power on page 78 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. Mecha in TL 3+ settings treat their comms system as a complementary system when using common frequencies (defined as "senses" in the power's description) such as radio, laser, microwave, neutrino, etc. This feature is considered a base system only when using extremely exotic senses to transmit and receive, like tangled quantum particles or the psychic or magic spectrums, or when the setting's TL and background doesn't allow for regular communication and the mecha uses hyperadvanced science or magic. Use the Alternate Power feat to add more frequencies to a Base Comms.

BASE SENSORS (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2-3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

Assemble your mecha's sensor system using the Super-Senses power on page 103 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. Mecha in TL 3+ settings treat their sensor system as a complementary system when using common frequencies (defined as "senses" in the power's description) such as radar, energy signatures, heat signatures, or microwaves. This feature is considered a base system only when using extremely exotic senses, like the psychic or magic spectrums, or when the setting's TL doesn't allow for regular sensor equipment and the mecha uses hyperadvanced science or magic. You can use the Computers (for technology-based systems) or Notice (for supernatural-based systems) skills to actively scan the sensor's covered area to search or analyze anything the chosen sense can pick up. Detection by sensors only indicates the presence of something; you can overhear communications in that sense, but to do anything else, you need a base comms system or an onboard computer (or equivalent). When a weapon with the Guided extra (see the **Weapons Systems** section) acquires a lock on you through a sense that your array can use, you can make a Computers or Notice check as a reaction (the DC is the lock's own skill check result) to realize that your mecha is under somebody's automated sights.

DATALINK (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

This feature works exactly like the Datalink power, which allows a mecha operator to engage in electronic warfare against other mecha, vehicles, or any target with a computer system, including hacking into a target's databases, communications, and IFF transponders. Datalink's range is limted to the Base Comms range.

PROFILE DATABASE (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT)

This system is able to recognize enemy targets from the profile picked up by sensor systems. The pilot gains the use of the Assessment feat but uses a Computers or Knowledge (technology) check instead of a Sense Motive check, opposed by the target's Computers check. Mecha attack and defense bonuses take pilot skill as well as mecha features and handling penalties into account.

PROFILE ENTRY (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

This feature expands the data contained in a Profile Database. Choose a mecha or vehicle model (or alien or monster, if the mecha is used to fight those). This feature works like the Favored Opponent feat with regards to the chosen target.

RECORDING EQUIPMENT (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2, 1 POINT)

The mecha can record any data that it can pick up through its sensors. A simple Computers check (DC 10) can find and playback any entry. The system's capacity is narrative; that is, the GM decides when and how the memory is full. For more realistic and detailed games, consider that the base recorder has a 2-hour capacity to record all sensor input, each TL in the setting moving this capacity one step up the **Time and Value Progression Table**, and it can be further increased each time this feature is selected.

DEFENSE AND COUNTERMEASURES

One of the main reasons a pilot would jump inside a mecha is the protection. A mecha not only provides impressive weaponry and features to an otherwise ordinary human, but also the chance to go toe to toe against gigantic menaces without being instantly vaporized, crushed, blown up, or any other unpleasant alternative. A mecha's defenses start with its inherent Toughness bonus due to its chassis, followed by its armor plating. A mecha can add different defensive options on top of its basic shielding.

ARMOR (BASE, TL 1, 1 POINT PER RANK)

Define your mecha's armor plating using the Protection power on page 96 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. Very few mecha have Ablative or Limited armor, and Impervious is a common extra, although not all of the armor's ranks may be Impervious.

AUTONOMOUS DEFENSIVE ACTUATORS (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2, 1 POINT PER RANK)

Based on targeting and defensive calculations, a mecha with this feature gains a +2 bonus per rank to attack rolls for the purpose of blocking melee attacks (maximum +10).

CLOAK SYSTEM (BASE, TL 4, 2 POINTS PER RANK)

The mecha is able to hide its presence actively from detection. Define your mecha's cloak system using the Concealment power on page 78 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. The Blending and Passive flaws are recommended for mecha.

COUNTERMEASURES (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha is equipped with flares, chaff, smoke, or some other measure that can stop incoming attacks before they hit. You must choose a descriptor that the countermeasure protects against, such as heat-seeking missiles, lasers, radar-guided rockets, or magical bolts of lightning. This descriptor matches the senses used by the Guided extra (see the **Mecha Weapon Modifiers** section). Each rank in this feature gives you a +2 bonus to block rolls against the specified attack. You can only use it a number of times equal to its rank before needing to reload the system as part of regular mecha maintenance. For an unlimited number of blocks, purchase the Deflect power normally. You can have different Countermeasures as part of an array with the Alternate Power feat, but that way you can only try to deflect a specific attack descriptor per round, so if you are targeted by a heat-seeking missile, a radar-guided rocket, and a dragon's fiery breath, you must choose which one your Countermeasures will block.

DECOY PROJECTION MODULE (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT)

If you successfully deflect an attack with the Countermeasures feature, you can make another Computers check (DC equal to the attack) as a reaction. Success means that the mecha's systems fooled the attacker's into targeting any other target that's adjacent to your mecha. This works like the Redirect feat.

EMERGENCY SYSTEM SHUTDOWN (BASE, TL 3, 1 POINT)

A disabled mecha shuts down all active systems to avoid suffering any further damage. Whenever the mecha gains a Disabled condition, you can shut it down as a reaction. The mecha suffers no penalty to Toughness saves from accumulated Injured conditions against any damage suffered while shut down (further damage can still destroy the mecha if it fails a save), but it cannot come back into action until repaired.

IMPROVED PLATING (BASE, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha's plating materials are treated to resist a particular kind of attack. Define your mecha's improved plating using the Immunity power on page 89 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. Plating should only have two or three immunities that it grants the mecha, subject to the GM's permission. One of the most common immunities is critical hits (2 ranks).

JAMMING (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha is equipped with jamming equipment that can disrupt signals in an area. Choose one sense in the electronic, non-visual spectrums such as radio, radar, microwave, or infrared. This descriptor matches the senses used by the Guided extra (see the **Mecha Weapon Modifiers** section). You can create an area of concealment around the mecha with a radius of 5 feet per rank. When first activating the countermeasure, make a Computers or Stealth check as a move action, not affected by the mecha's size modifier. The result becomes the DC for any opposed checks to detect the mecha by a sensor system using that sense. You can make new checks at any time. This is similar to the Obscure power.

REACTIVE ARMOR (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 3 POINTS PER RANK)

The mecha's armor is built to react to certain threats automatically, to reduce their effectiveness. Choose a specific damage descriptor such as laser, ballistic, fire, chemical, or arcane bolt. Any source of damage matching the descriptor has its damage bonus reduced by one for every rank in this feature. This reduction happens before the damage bonus is compared to an Impervious armor's ranks. While attacks with the Penetrating extra ignore Impervious protection, their damage bonus is still reduced by Reactive Armor if their descriptors match. A mecha can only have a maximum of Reactive Armor ranks equal to half its Armor ranks and may only have up to two types of Reactive Armor at the same time.

REACTIVE CAMOUFLAGE (BASE, TL 4, 1 POINT)

The mecha uses a series of visual tricks and structural mobility to present a harder target for attackers. A mecha with this feature gains the benefit of the Elusive Target feat.

SHIELD GENERATOR (BASE, TL 4, 1 POINT PER RANK)

Define your mecha's shields using the Force Field power on page 85 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. Unlike with armor, Limited and Ablative force fields are far more common than those without these flaws. Technological explanations abound, but the really interesting force fields have far stranger explanations than just magnetic/gravitic repulsion:
kinetic shields activated by the pilot's terror, feathery spirit wings enveloping the mecha when the shield blocks an attack, etc.

TARGETING SYSTEM

A mecha's targeting system is composed of several different features that are purchased separately. These features help the pilot hit more accurately in combat, tracking heat signatures, radar echoes, advanced imaging analysis, or even auras or psychic resonance. You must define the system's descriptor, that is, the method it uses for tracking targets, for a target may have countermeasures particularly designed to foil it. Common targeting descriptors include heat signatures, radar signal, laser pointer, aura tracking, psychic signature, IFF (Identify-Friend-or-Foe) transponder, radio signal, magical aura, and chi power. All targeting systems work better when aimed at a target-locked enemy (see **Target Lock**).

TARGET LOCK (OPTIONAL)

Any mecha with base sensors, an advanced onboard computer, or any targeting system is capable of establishing a target lock on an enemy. You establish a target lock by making a skill check relevant to your sensor, comms, or targeting systems (Computers, Notice, or even Knowledge (arcane lore)), with a DC equal to 10 + your target's Defense. This is a standard action. The target lock operates on the same senses or sense types as your sensor, comms, and targeting systems, so a target that somehow gains concealment from those senses ruins your attempt to establish (or maintain) a lock.

If you're successful, you have a target lock on that enemy. You can only have one target lock at any one time. Targeting systems and attacks with the Guided extra gain special benefits against a target-locked opponent.

You know when you're target-locked if your mecha's sensors use the same senses as the system that established the lock. From then, you can try to break the lock with the Countermeasure or Jamming systems or with a maneuvering check (see **Mecha Combat**).

IDENTIFY-FRIEND-OR-FOE TRANSPONDER (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT)

This subsystem links with your firing control and locks the trigger when it detects you're aiming at an ally, allowing you to fire into melee without the –4 penalty, like the Precise Shot feat. However, the system only works if your allies have IFF transponders, too. You can add or subtract targets' radio signals to the IFF Transponder with a full action, performing a Computers check (DC 15). This system is susceptible to being hacked. If your target is also target-locked, your allies don't need their own IFF transponders for you to enjoy this advantage.

OPTICAL TRACKING (BASE, TL 4, 1 POINT)

The mecha's systems receive targeting information from the direction of your eyes, and it stabilizes your aim accordingly. When you aim, you gain double the bonus, as per the Improved Aim feat. You gain an additional +1 bonus if your target is also target-locked. You automatically lose the target lock after you fire.

PINPOINT ACCURACY SYSTEM (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 4, 1 POINT PER RANK)

This system uses the information of a Profile Entry (see **Sensors and Communications**) to locate quickly a target's weak points. The target type covered by the database is not immune to your critical strikes. Each rank covers one particular enemy in the Database. This is the Critical Strike feat. If your target is also target-locked, you gain a +2 bonus to your attack roll to confirm a critical hit.

TARGET TRACKING INTERFACE (BASE, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

Select a single weapon system the mecha possesses or has available. The mecha's targeting system links with it to provide you with a +2 bonus to attack rolls and skill checks to establish a target lock. Choose whether this feature is attached to the targeting array or the weapon system itself when purchasing it. Each rank allows you to gain a +2 bonus with a different weapon system. Your total attack bonus is limited by the setting's power level. This is the Accurate power feat, applied accordingly.

MISCELLANEOUS

The following features are hard to classify, providing unusual abilities to a mecha. A few of them are applications of powers described in *Mutants & Masterminds*, with a few interpretations and adaptations for use as mecha systems.

CARGO SPACE (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 1, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha has empty space inside its body that can serve as storage. This space can hold one-fourth of the mecha's carrying capacity. Another rank increases this capacity to one-half. The mecha can store a single object that's one size category smaller than itself, two that are two size categories smaller, etc. The GM can judge how many smaller items constitute a single one for purpose of determining its size category.

CHANNEL (TRAIT) (BASE, TL 1, 1 POINT PER RANK)

Because the pilot is hidden beneath the mecha's armor, using some traits can be outright impossible. Each rank in this feature allows the mecha to channel some of its pilot's traits. Select one feat or generic power that the mecha can channel; from that point onward, the pilot can use that trait as if the mecha were his own body. For example, the mecha needs a single rank in this feature to allow its pilot to use the Fascinate feat, representing a high-fidelity comms system that correctly translates the pilot's unique and fascinating charm. The GM can decide that some feats don't need this feature to be used, which is mostly the case for Fortune feats. Conversely, a single Blast Channel feature can channel any Blast power, regardless of its power feats, descriptors, or modifiers.

COMPOSITE (BASE, TL 5, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha is actually composed of different semiautonomous mecha. This is basically the **Gestalt** power, as found on page 86 of *Mutants & Masterminds,* with a few differences. For every four elements, the composite form is one size category larger than the elements. Elements must have at least one rank of Flight Systems or Jump Rockets in order to get into their place in the composite. An element that has its own pilot must be at least of Large size; power armor cannot be a composite element. Elements that are mecha themselves must have one rank of the Mechamorph feature devoted to their element form. Assembling the composite form requires one full action per element. An element's pilot or the composite form's pilot can reduce this with a Pilot check for each element (see the Mechamorph feature for DCs). Disengaging the composite is a free action for each element.

ENVIRONMENTAL OPTIMIZATION (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2, 1 OR 2 POINTS PER RANK)

The mecha has special equipment that allows it to fight better in a particular environment. The mecha gains the benefit of the Favored Environment feat, but it can only have a maximum of two different favored environments.

(EQUIPMENT) MOUNT (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 1-3, 1-3 POINTS)

The mecha has a mounting that can fit external equipment such as weapons and detachable features, acting as an extra "hand." Define what type of equipment the mounting is adapted for when purchasing it. For one point, the mounting can only hold a particular type of item (TL 1). For two points, it can hold any item of the same relative size, regardless of its type (TL 2). For three points, the mounting has interface connections that allow the pilot to operate the equipment held in the mounting as if it were part of the mecha (TL 3), although a piece of equipment operated in this manner needs the Plug-In Interface feature. For equipment that is always mounted and not meant to be detached, simply purchase it normally, as part of the mecha.

HIDDEN MOUNT (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 2, 1 POINT)

This is a feature that applies to an Equipment Mount. The affected mounting can retract under the mecha's armor and stay hidden from view, gaining total concealment from anything but sensors tuned to a sense that can see through the armor. Deploying and retracting a hidden piece of equipment is a move action, but it can be reduced to a free action if either the pilot or the mecha have the Quick Draw feat.

IMPROVED SYSTEM PROCESSOR (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 3, 1 POINT)

Assign this feature to any other mecha feature that requires a skill check. You can re-roll a failed check for that feature as if the mecha had the Second Chance feat.

MECHAMORPH (BASE, TL 4, 1 POINT)

The mecha can change its shape by sliding, snapping, folding, retracting, expanding, and generally reconfiguring its frame. When choosing this feature, the mecha gains one alternate form built with the same point cost. Most alternate configurations take the form of regular vehicles (see **Vehicles** on page 142 of *Mutants & Masterminds*), in which case they follow the rules for vehicles, from their construction and cost to their operation (equipment points used to purchase a vehicle form are considered mecha points for the purpose of this feature, and a vehicle doesn't suffer a handling penalty due to size). Vehicle forms do not possess hands or legs, with the Disability drawback already considered to be part of the cost of a normal vehicle. It's not rare to find monster-like shapes that provide different functionality to the mecha, like a dragon form with the ability to fly or a panther shape that allows the mecha to leap and climb. A mecha weapon that is purchased as a handheld weapon can be available in all alternate forms, if they have a way of wielding and using it *and* the alternate form pays for it again; if not, they are stored away. Mecha usually keep all their

complementary systems in all their forms, but they must still pay for them in each form. Switching between configurations is a full action, but a pilot can reduce it with a successful Pilot check (DC 15 for a standard action, DC 20 for a move action, DC 25 for a free action, and DC 30 for a reaction). Each time you choose this feature, the mecha gains a different alternate form.

PASSENGER/CREW QUARTERS (COMPLEMENTARY, TL 1, 1 POINT)

The mecha can actually carry personnel not involved in operating it. Reduce a mecha's carrying capacity by 1 point of Strength for every 10 passengers or 2 two-person bedrooms complete with accommodations. Suffice to say, a mecha has to be at least of Gargantuan size to have crew quarters, although mecha as small as Huge can have a number of passengers within reason.

PLUG-IN INTERFACE (BASE, TL 3, 1 POINT)

This feature can only be purchased for handheld equipment. It is actually a power feat for the Device power. A handheld weapon or device with this feature can attach itself to an Equipment Mount and allow the pilot to operate it as if it was part of the mecha, freeing the mecha's hands. A normal Device can take this feature as a power feat.

SUPPORT UNITS (BASE, TL 3, 1 POINT PER RANK)

The mecha has one or more autonomous droids, spirits, or satellite units. These are basically minions that the mecha can deploy, under the pilot's control. Each rank in this feat grants 15 power points to build one or more minions. It's possible to build a satellite that the mecha can link up to by giving both mecha and minion the Super-Senses (communication link) power and giving the satellite the necessary Flight ranks and sensor array to actually be useful (although a sufficiently ranged Blast makes a very nice orbital strike capability too).

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Whether a mecha's sole purpose is its weaponry or arms are only extra elements for its concept, mecha weapons are as unique as much as they are very large. Ironically, the mecha's weapons are the simplest thing to purchase, based around Blast, Strike, and other harming powers and the many feats and modifiers that can come with them.

- **Mounted Weapon:** Mecha weapons purchased with the same pool of points as the rest of their systems are integral parts of their construction. They are mounted and sometimes very prominent weapons; a mecha can retract or even hide these weapons, but they are always available to it unless torn violently off by the giant monster of the week. They are considered base systems, costing one mecha point per power point that the attack costs.
- **Handheld Weapons:** Any oversized rifle, plasma sword, or any other weapon that the mecha can wield but can lose is replaceable equipment and is purchased as an easy-to-lose Device: three mecha points for every five power points that the attack costs.

MECHA WEAPON MODIFIERS

While existing modifiers already give a lot of versatility to the design of mecha weapons, there are a few effects seen in manga and anime that require some extra twiddling with the rules.

AUTONOMOUS (EXTRA, +2)

The selected weapon has its own subprocessor, which allows it to attack on its own when you're busy doing something else. At the beginning of each round, you decide who makes the attack this turn, you or the autonomous weapon. You can fire the weapon as a free action, but then you cannot make your own attacks. However, you *can* use your available actions to do



other things. If you can make an attack of opportunity, you can let an autonomous weapon do it. The weapon has an attack bonus equal to its rank and receives no bonus from any feat, feature, or circumstance that might benefit your own attacks. A mecha can only have one autonomous weapon per rank in the Onboard Computer System feature. A hero can only have one autonomous weapon per Intelligence bonus. You can only fire a single autonomous weapon in your turn.

CLUSTER (AREA EXTRA, +2)

A cluster attack shoots several small strikes over an entire area. For mecha, this usually represents a rocket volley, but it could also represent multiple cannon batteries, a psychic storm of supernatural lightning, etc. The power fills an area originating from the mecha that is as wide as the mecha's space (see the **Mecha Size Traits** table) and 10 feet per rank in length. Roll an attack roll for the Cluster power; any target caught in the area will suffer the damage if the attack roll surpasses their Defense (unlike other area powers that are avoided with a Reflex save). If the attack roll surpasses a target's Defense by +5, the damage bonus for that target increases by +2.

GUIDED (EXTRA, +1)

A ranged attack with this extra pursues a target-locked target until it hits. A Guided attack depends on a particular sense, such as infrared or radar. Normally, this extra grants an additional attack on your next turn, as per the Homing power feat. However, if your target is a target-locked opponent (see the **Target Lock** sidebar in the targeting systems section), the benefit from this extra is much greater. For each 2 points that the skill check that established the lock surpasses the target's Defense, you gain a +1 bonus to your attack roll with the Guided attack, not limited by the setting's power level. Also, if the attack misses, you can reroll on the next turn as a free action, but the bonus from the skill check is reduced by one. You can reroll an attack several times, reducing the bonus by one each time, until it is reduced to +0, at which time the attack finally fails for good.

STANDARD-ISSUE DRAWBACKS

The Gamemaster can decide that one or more of these drawbacks are standard for the setting; that is, *all* mecha suffer from them as part of their innate functionality. The heroes can get rid of these drawbacks for their mecha by paying their cost in power points, representing how special these mecha are in the setting, but this option must be authorized by the GM.

POWER SINK (DRAWBACK)

An attack drains the mecha's power source so badly that it needs some time to recover. Whenever the modified weapon scores a natural 1 on an attack roll, the mecha is dazed for one round. This drawback has a value of –1, but it can be increased by one if the mecha is stunned instead of dazed and by every point in the die result that increases the chance for the mecha to be incapacitated (1-2, 1-3 and so forth). The maximum value this drawback can have is –4.

RELOADING (POWER FEAT)

An attack with the Fades flaw can be reloaded quickly. A single rank in this feat allows the modified attack to recover all its uses once per encounter, by spending a full action (either recharging energy or inserting more ammo). Additional ranks can increase the number of times per encounter this can be done (maximum 3) or decrease the time needed one step down the **Time and Value Progression Table** (reduced to a minimum of one move action). A hero with the Quick Draw feat can use this feat as a free action, if the power is already reduced to a move action.

MECHA DRAWBACKS

Drawbacks in mecha represent malfunctions, defective construction, or simply technology that is not as advanced as it could be. Mecha can make a bid for realism by stacking drawbacks, reducing the advantages they give to their pilots or making their operation harder and more exclusive.

EXISTING DRAWBACKS

Mecha can suffer from some of the same drawbacks as heroes can, as described in *Mutants & Masterminds* and **Chapter 2: Heroes** in this book, the latter marked by an asterisk in the following list of interpretations of existing drawbacks:

- **Action:** Climbing onto a mecha and getting it running is a full action normally. Each step up the **Time and Value Progression Table** that this duration is increased is worth one point. This can represent a combination of factors, such as a lengthy operational checklist, a long prayer, getting into a complicated control harness, or getting naked and having the cockpit filled with a buffering goo.
- **Activation*:** Some systems, or the mecha itself, may require a skill check to activate them. This will usually be Computers for an electronics-based mecha, but it may include Craft, Knowledge (arcane lore), a Perform specialty, or any other skill appropriate for the series. This is a very common drawback (3 points), with an intensity defined by the DC of the skill check required (Acrobatics DC 10 to squeeze inside the cockpit, Computers DC 15 for a systems check, or Knowledge (arcane lore) DC 20 for a more complex incantation).
- **Confined Movement*:** A mecha may have a limited freedom of movement, such as a mecha with an external power source from which it cannot separate or a mecha that can only travel on roads. The frequency of this drawback depends on how often the mecha will face situations that force it to leave its confinement, and the intensity represents how long the mecha can operate normally outside its confinement without consequence (shutdown, dismissal, destruction, etc).
- **Disability:** A mecha cannot perform a function that another mecha takes for granted, as defined by the defaults in this chapter. This can be a mecha without hands (very common, moderate, 4 points) or with poor visibility for the pilot (–4 penalty to Notice checks and ranged attacks, common, moderate, 3 points), for example.
- **One-Way Transformation:** A mecha that can transform can have this drawback with all the normal considerations. This drawback may also apply to how long it takes for the pilot to get out of the mecha, such as the aforementioned being naked so the piloting interface works better or having the cockpit actually be an autonomous device that must be extracted by specialized machinery.
- **Power Loss:** All mecha systems described in this book consider that there's a chance that they may be selectively shut down. New powers that you adapt can have this drawback to represent that they are easy to shut down by an opponent, such as blowing off the component that controls the power or disabling its control system somehow.
- **Weak Point:** Most mecha are not as indestructible as they initially appear. This drawback works just as explained in *Mutants & Masterminds*.

ARCHAIC FEATURE

One of the mecha's features uses obsolete technology. Every time you activate the obsolete feature, roll a die. A result of 1 means that the archaic feature simply doesn't work, due to shoddy construction or system incompatibility, and it must be repaired or jury-rigged with a relevant skill check. This is an uncommon drawback (1 point); its intensity depends on how hard it is to fix the feature back into operation (DC 10, 15 or 20).

CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

The standard operating procedures for mecha under these rules don't ask for much from the pilot, but this drawback can make it so that operating the mecha requires a lot of effort and training. This drawback is worth one point for every following requirement that piloting the mecha requires; the GM authorizes how many and which requirements you can add to the mecha, since some are mutually exclusive or redundant:

The pilot must have the Mecha Pilot Proficiency feat or equivalent or suffer a –4 penalty to all die rolls related to operating and moving the mecha.

Piloting the mecha requires a Pilot (mecha) specialty skill, not simply generic Pilot ranks. A mecha with Neural/Spirit Interface cannot have this drawback.

The pilot needs a minimum of ranks in a main maneuvering skill equal to the mecha's handling modifier. A maneuvering skill is one in which you must have ranks in order to control a mecha: Pilot or Pilot (mecha), Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, or Ride.

The pilot makes the mecha's grapple checks with a Pilot check, not including the mecha's normal grapple bonus for size or strength.

DAMAGE FEEDBACK

The pilot is not fully insulated inside the cockpit and can suffer part of the damage inflicted on the mecha, whether by being knocked around an improperly padded cockpit or through a full neural interface. Whenever the mecha fails a Toughness save, there is a chance that the pilot may have to make a save of his own. The frequency of this drawback depends on which

of the mecha's damage conditions require the pilot to make a Toughness save, disabled (uncommon, 1 point), stunned (common, 2 points), or injured (very common, 3 points). These can be combined with receiving a critical hit (uncommon, 1 point) or falling prone (uncommon, 1 point). The intensity of the drawback is defined by the pilot's Toughness save DC, 5 + damage inflicted (minor, +0 points), DC 10 + damage bonus (moderate, +1 point), or DC 15 + damage bonus (major, +2 points). The damage the pilot suffers is nonlethal, but for one additional point, the damage is lethal. Do not add the bonus damage from critical hits to this DC. You can take this drawback for two or all conditions. Take the condition with the highest value and add one for each additional condition. You only make a single Toughness save if you're affected by more than one condition at a time, but the DC increases by +5 for each additional condition that affects you. This drawback should not be worth more than 5 points after accounting for all the options.

EXPOSED COCKPIT

The mecha's crew is normally hidden beneath layers of armor plating and chassis, but a mecha with this drawback has a cockpit that leaves the crew partially or completely exposed through a clear-glass canopy, a large viewport, or even a motorcycle-like seat. The value of this drawback depends on how exposed the crew is. Partial concealment with cover grants one point, partial concealment without cover grants 2 points, no concealment but having cover grants 3 points, and no concealment and no cover grants 4 points. The mecha's entire crew is exposed this way. Reduce the drawback's value by one point for each step up the **Time and Value Progression Table,** where the value represents a number of crew members who remain protected. In any case, the pilot is *always* exposed.

HARD CONTROLS

The mecha is much harder to control than its size warrants. Choose one of the following: attack rolls, initiative rolls, Defense, or maneuvering skill checks. This drawback is worth 1 point for every –1 additional penalty that the mecha's handling modifier applies to the chosen trait or roll. You can purchase the drawback for different traits or rolls, but you cannot gain more than 6 points from the total of this drawback.

HIGH GROUND PRESSURE

A mecha with this defect has a very small contact area with the ground through its feet, wheels, or tracks, Its entire weight rests on very narrow surfaces, making it sink on weak terrain. Every surface but the hardest concrete, asphalt, or metal is considered one step worse, with regards to hampered movement. Normal but soft surfaces become bad surfaces (1/2 movement), bad surfaces become very bad surfaces (1/4 movement), and very bad surfaces actually entangle the mecha automatically. This is a common, moderate drawback, worth 3 points. A mecha with Flight Systems or Burrowing cannot have this drawback.

LIMITED POWER SOURCE

The mecha's power source may run out of juice in the middle of operations. This is more appropriate in settings where mecha technology is barely starting development. This drawback works like the Fades flaw and starts at a value of 1 point for an operation time of 5 hours; each time period down the **Time and Value Progression Table** increases the drawback's value by one. Also, reduce the value by one if the mecha can connect to an external power source (see the Confined Movement drawback); the clock starts ticking only after disconnecting from it.

NOISY/SIGNATURE

The mecha makes quite a racket, or its systems are easy to pick up by the right equipment. Choose a non-sight sense that exists and is relevant to the setting. Others get a +5 bonus to their checks made to perceive the mecha in that sense, like Notice for natural senses or Computers for sensor equipment. The mecha cannot have any concealment from that sense. This drawback is worth one point for each sense chosen. The GM can decide a chosen sense is not worth this drawback.

PARASITIC POWER SOURCE

The mecha derives its power not from an engine or even your motion, but from your own lifeforce. It can suck your blood directly, through painful connectors, or simply absorb your life energy.

Every time you score a natural 1 on any kind of roll regarding mecha operation, the mecha's power supply system attacks you successfully; the attack is nonlethal and has a damage bonus (resisted with a Toughness save as normal) equal to +4 for every size category that the mecha is larger than you. If you become unconscious at any time, the mecha stops working.

This is a common, major drawback worth 4 points. For a value of 5 points, the mecha keeps functioning after you are unconscious, controlled by the GM and inflicting lethal damage each time it drains your energy, until stopped by another character. Alternately, the GM may allow the user to resist the drain using Fortitude or Will, like the Alternate Save modifier.

STALL SPEED

Stall speed is the minimum speed winged aircraft must maintain in order to keep flying. A mecha with this drawback lacks vertical thrusters and must maintain a speed equal to one fourth of its maximum or fly out of control (see **Using Mecha** for details on losing and recovering control of mecha). It also needs a runway to take off and land.

This is a common, minor drawback, worth 2 points. A 1-point version grants the mecha the ability to land and take off vertically, but forward movement is still affected by the Stall Speed.

UNSTABLE POWER SOURCE

The mecha's power source has an irregular output and can short out in any given circumstance. When gaining this drawback, the mecha acquires a "nonlethal" damage condition track in addition to the single lethal track that mecha have as constructs. Every time you score a natural 20 with any kind of roll involving mecha operation, the mecha must make a "power save" (d20 roll, DC 10; bruised levels impose a –1 penalty as usual).

Failing the save works like normal damage, except that this "energy damage" represents failing power output. Only damage from the mecha's own power source counts for this track; as an object, the mecha is still immune to normal nonlethal damage from other sources. The bruised conditions represent cumulative degeneration, while stunned, staggered, and unconscious conditions represent the power source giving up temporarily or permanently. Power recovery checks are relevant skill checks (Computers, Craft, Knowledge (arcane lore), etc.) made by the pilot or a crewmember each round, as a full action, with DC 10, with a –2 penalty for every bruised condition.

This is a common, major drawback (4 points). The drawback's value can be reduced by one for every +2 bonus the mecha can have for its power save and power recovery checks.

VOLATILE

Fuel, a boiler, or ammunition may explode if the mecha is disabled or destroyed. If the attack that disables or destroys the mecha also knocks it back (see **Knockback** in page 165 of *Mutants & Masterminds*), the mecha will explode after five rounds. This blast has an Explosion area and a number of ranks equal to the mecha's Toughness for purposes of damage bonus, range, and Reflex save DC.

A destroyed mecha can be repaired (see **Mecha Repair,** near the end of this chapter), or you will get a replacement after the encounter (or a couple of days). This is an uncommon, major drawback worth 3 points.

USING MECHA

Depending on the series, using a mecha can be as simple as getting out of bed or literally require a degree in rocket science. Mecha combine the characteristics of vehicles, powers, and devices, giving you a mix of rules and considerations you can choose from in order to define how mecha work in your setting. This section looks at handling mecha in play, from their overall role to the skills and traits needed to operate them and how they function (and differ) in combat.

THE ROLE OF MECHA

The first thing to decide when including mecha in a series is what role they are going to play, because the more involved the mecha are to the heroes' activities, the more you may want to detail their functionality.

MECHA AS PLOT DEVICES

The easiest way to include mecha is if they are plot devices. You don't even need to assign traits for the mecha if their only purpose is to prove a point, and they won't receive a lot of screen time anyway. This is particularly appropriate when the mecha are not "normal"; that is, they are not something any factory can produce, and their powers and capabilities will defy definition through normal rules. Guardian mecha are the type most likely to be considered plot devices.

When the mecha are plot devices, there are very few of them in the setting, and each one is supremely special. Possibly, there is only one. Heroes have their own abilities and powers, and they rely on them during most of the story. Finding the mecha can be the goal of the whole adventure, or at least their presence might be unseen but felt in the story's progression. Once found, access to the mecha will be restricted to dramatic moments.

Once the pilots climb into a plot device mecha, the game turns into a narrative exercise, where GM and players exchange actions and reactions without dice getting in the way. If the heroes use any trait at all, it's most likely to be their own abilities and skills, exchanging outraged arguments with their enemies while they fire their weapons at each other or explore their own sense of purpose.

MECHA AND THE SINGLE HERO

Mecha played as plot devices or prototypes are very special in the story, so special that there might only be one in the entire world. This leaves open the question: which of the heroes gets to pilot it? The answer depends greatly on the style of your game group, as well as the story you're playing through. If only one of the heroes is designated as the pilot, that means that he or she has a very special role in the story as well, but not that the rest of the characters are only window dressing. A scene where only one or a few of the heroes are inside mecha must be conceived so that the rest of the characters have something to do as well.

Maybe the other heroes are pilots of conventional vehicles there to support the mecha's mission or control room operators that are busy hacking into enemy communications. Maybe they have amazing powers of their own and do not need a mecha to blow things up. Whatever the case, talk with the rest of the group to reach an agreement; the pilot of the single mecha in the series is certainly special, but not so much that he steals the spotlight from his friends and allies.

The anime *Bokurano* solved this issue by letting each protagonist have his or her turn at piloting the single, plot device mecha. Then again, each protagonist irrevocably died while doing so...

MECHA AS PROTOTYPES

In narrative terms, being in the early stages of development is not the only thing that classifies mecha as "prototypes," but also how often the heroes get to use them. Prototype mecha are just being introduced in the setting, and people are not used to seeing them, even if they've heard about their existence. The base technology behind their functionality may be poorly understood, but producing the mecha was not a fluke, and they can be repaired and improved by regular technicians.

A prototype mecha is created through the Device power of one of the heroes, even if narratively the mecha doesn't belong to him (yet). The mecha in a prototype role will probably have one or two unique powers or traits that cannot be reproduced by anything known in the setting, not even other mecha. These powers can be inherent to the mecha or separate Devices that it can use. Heroes may possess a unique characteristic that allows them to pilot a mecha, which other people lack, such as a rare blood condition, psychic ability, or simply the mark of fate.

Because they are so special in the setting, the mecha are only to be used sparingly and, thus, do not require a lot of detail in the rules regarding their use. Prototype mecha are extensions of the heroes piloting them, simple add-ons of powers and traits that a hero has access to by climbing inside the cockpit. The mecha move like characters and reproduce all the combat and movement tactics a character might employ.

MECHA AS SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

While a common sight in the setting, a mecha considered special equipment is exactly that—special. Not just anybody has access to a mecha, and those who do have the training or talent to operate them, although it's something that anyone in the setting can aspire to. In a role like this, mecha are the equivalent of jet fighters or private planes; they can be put together and sold easily enough, but only very few people and organizations can afford them.

These mecha can be mass-produced, and depending on the series's actual focus, a hero may purchase them with Device, Equipment, or a combination of both. There's also the chance that stock models exist and you don't need to purchase a mecha with your own power points, but the GM lets you pilot one as part of the story. Still, mecha are unique enough that they are only deployed in special circumstances, and most of the story will happen outside them.

Because they have the potential to appear more often in the story, or even be the sole method of combat for a particular series, fighting in mecha becomes a little more involved. While pilots can still move them as if they were their own body, mecha playing the role of special equipment have additional functions and features that demand that the hero know more about their technology.

Asking for skill checks to control a mecha opens the window to dramatic failure or spectacular success at some tasks, and thus this level of complication is advised when mecha play a more prominent role in the story. This role has the potential to involve the most rules regarding mecha operation.

MECHA AS EVERYDAY GEAR

Mecha that play the role of everyday gear are the equivalent of luxury vehicles or common industrial machinery. Nobody bats an eye at seeing a police mecha directing traffic, and mecha sports are all the rage. The variety of mecha models is staggering, and anyone with the right mix of resources and technical expertise could very possibly have one.

Because of the widespread availability of mecha in this scenario, heroes can purchase them as Devices (for mecha with unique traits), Equipment (for

simple, production-line models), or even with a high enough Wealth check. As with settings where mecha are special equipment, a team of heroes may get their mecha for free if the story warrants it and the GM is feeling generous. The heroes have more liberty in using their mecha, especially if they own it or built it with their own hands, but seeing a mecha wander freely amounts to seeing an armored personnel carrier nonchalantly cutting lanes in traffic.

Depending on the realism level for the setting, everyday mecha may require constant skill checks to control, or they may behave as a second skin for the pilot's body. In this role, a mecha is supposed to be so commonplace that piloting one is just like driving a car; checks are required only for complex maneuvers.

PILOT TRAITS

As mentioned before, a mecha is not a complete construct but an accessory of its pilot. As such, it lacks many of the traits a normal hero or a minion has, and it obtains them from the pilot that controls it. A hero must then polish up his own skills and abilities if he wants to be an ace mecha pilot.

MECHA AND POWER LEVEL

A pilot's traits can suddenly shoot through the roof when inside a mecha. After all, the whole purpose of having access to one is to perform the impossible, and most mecha pilots are just ordinary people who get to climb into an extraordinary machine.

Mecha are not created with a strict power level in mind, since just about any character could pilot them. However, oower level does limit what the combination of pilot and mecha can achieve.

To keep the game as challenging as it is fun for all players, you can use the Power Tier options found in **Chapter 6: Gamemastering Manga** when running a mecha series. To sum it up, characters have a relatively low power level when they are "on foot" and interacting with other characters. However, when they climb into a mecha, they enter a sub-scenario of your setting with a higher PL. When inside the mecha, characters will not enter into conflict with other characters but rather with other war machines or monsters of comparable power.

You may need to add systems to the mecha that grant the character bonuses to attack, defense, saves, and skills, so he can meet the higher Power Level of mecha combat.

ATTACK AND DEFENSE

A mecha cannot buy attack and defense bonuses on its own, and it depends completely on the pilot to provide them. The mecha can be built with an increased Dexterity to reduce its handling penalty to the pilot's attack and defense bonuses, or it can come equipped with a Target Tracking Interface to improve attack rolls. The pilot is still limited by the setting's power level to attack and defense bonuses, which can be problematic, as the mecha's handling modifier does not affect that limit, but it certainly affects the pilot's chances to actually hit something or avoid getting hit.

SAVING THROWS

Mecha themselves make no saving throws. They are naturally immune to effects that require Fortitude saves unless they affect objects, and they have no mind to target with Will effects. The pilot's Fortitude and Will saves are only useful when an effect requiring such saves targets him directly, which seldom ever happens considering that, unless the mecha has the Exposed Cockpit drawback, the pilot has total cover and concealment from the world outside.

A mecha can and does make Reflex saves using the Pilot's Reflex save. A pilot with Evasion transfers the effects of the feat to the mecha, unless the setting's realism forbids it (see **Handling**).

Toughness is the only save for which the mecha has its own ranks, as it represents the durability of its chassis and the resistance of its armor. A pilot does not need to make any Toughness saves while inside the cockpit, unless the mecha has the Damage Feedback drawback.

RESTRICTED MECHA

The Restricted feat of the Device power applies to a mecha, in order to render it an exclusive feature of the hero that pilots it. A restricted mecha often fulfills a prototype role to simulate why nobody can figure out why only a particular teenager is able to control it, although plot device mecha have this trait as well. Other mecha with this feat may represent a machine that's imprinted to a pilot's DNA and will not activate if anybody else climbs in or a spirit mecha that responds to the soul of the first person (the hero, obviously) who climbed into its cockpit after centuries of dormancy. One rank of Restricted limits pilots to a select group of people, while two ranks limits it to a single person.

FEATS

A pilot's feats can be transferred to the mecha directly, as they represent the hero's fighting ability. Mecha that respond like the pilot's own body present no obstacles for the pilot to use the feats he knows, but more realistic mecha can require that the pilot buys an additional rank (or an equivalent mecha feat for unranked feats) to use a particular feat inside a mecha.

SKILLS

The most important skill a pilot must concern himself with is his maneuvering skill. Usually,Pilot or Pilot (mecha) is used, depending on the setting, but Acrobatics can replace it in the case of power armor and mecha with the Neural/Spirit Interface feature. The appropriate maneuvering skill allows the hero to control the mecha beyond simple movement and, depending on the Control Requirements drawback, may be indispensable even for performing simple maneuvers. Regardless of any drawback or which skill moves the mecha, its handling modifier *always* affects the pilot's attempts to maneuver it with maneuvering skill checks.

Technology-based mecha will also require the pilot to be sufficiently trained in the Computers skill to operate its sensor and communications equipment, as well as some combat features like Countermeasures and the Guided extra. Mystical mecha will simply require Notice to activate equivalent systems.

Some skills may be unusable without some means to project the pilot's presence outwards. The pilot can use interaction skills through the communications systems, but sign language becomes complicated with hands that can crush rocks.

POWERS

A pilot with powers of his own may use them normally, if it would make sense for him to use them. Always remember that the pilot is enclosed in the cockpit, when determining if he can use any power he knows. Most attack powers or those with a Touch range are unavailable while inside a mecha, since targets have total cover from the hero (not the mecha), and the hero is unable to touch them directly from his piloting position. Most sensory powers and those with a Perception range are available, but sense-dependent powers are not, since targets cannot see the hero inside the cockpit.

Alteration effects can be unavailable depending on circumstances. A hero is free to use Shrinking as much as he likes, but Growth will squeeze him against the cockpit's walls, and Alternate Form (Fire) will present very serious hazards for the mecha's integrity.

The Channel (Trait) feature allows a hero to use powers using the mecha as if it were his own body, representing the mecha's ability to focus and release the pilot's energy (or whatever the source of the pilot's power is). From the

other side of the equation, the hero can have the Mecha Attunement feat to achieve the same effect, but this represents his own ability to consider his mecha as a natural extension of his body and soul.

A much simpler solution is the Exposed Cockpit drawback, which gives the pilot a clear line of effect to and from opponents.

MECHA SKILLS AND FEATS

The skills and feats in *Mutants & Masterminds* provide you with all the expertise and training you need to become a mecha pilot. A series with a more detailed approach to mecha may require pilots to acquire more in-depth expertise.

The following skill and feat alternatives are optional. You should only include them with the agreement of all players, as well as the GM, and only when mecha will be a large part of the series, so that all the extra power points spent on these options count for something.

PILOT — SPECIALTY, OPTIONAL

Normally, the Pilot skill allows you to control any special vehicle. With this option, Pilot becomes a specialty skill, with each category of special vehicles becoming its own skill: aircraft, heavy ground vehicles, spacecraft, seacraft, and mecha. A narrower scope than this is better achieved through proficiency feats.

IMPROVED OUTMANEUVER — COMBAT

You can perform the *outmaneuver* action (see the **Maneuvering Skills** section) as a free action instead of a move action. This only works inside a mecha or a vehicle, but the GM may allow you to use it while riding a creature, using Ride as the maneuvering skill. You can only outmaneuver a single opponent in your turn.

MECHA DOGFIGHTER — COMBAT, RANKED

Whenever you would be hit by an attack while piloting a mecha, you can try to avoid the successful attack as a reaction, by making a Pilot (or other maneuvering skill) check. If your result is greater than the attack, you avoid it completely. This Pilot check is limited by Defense PL, so a pilot may not be able to use his full Pilot bonus. This does not apply to area attacks, but it has an additional effect against autofire and cluster attacks: even if you fail to surpass the attack's result, your maneuvering skill check result is considered to be your Defense score (if higher than your actual Defense score) for the purpose of calculating the attack's extra damage. You can only avoid an attack as a reaction once until the beginning of your next turn, and only if you are aware of the attack (you cannot avoid surprise attacks or any attack when losing your dodge bonus to Defense). Each additional rank allows you to avoid an additional attack as a reaction, but your Pilot (or other maneuvering skill) check suffers a cumulative –2 penalty for each attack you tried to avoid in this round, whether you are successful or not. If a check fails by 5 or more points, you gain the Uncontrolled condition (see **Mecha Combat** in the next section).

NEW MECHA FEATS

FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
Combat Feats	
Improved Outmaneuver	Outmaneuver action is a free action instead of a move action.
Mecha Dogfighter (+)	Make a pilot check to avoid an attack.
General Feats	
Mecha Pilot Proficiency (Optional)	You are trained in piloting mecha.
Mecha Weapon Proficiency (Optional)	You are trained in the use of weapons meant for mecha.
Mecha Attunement (+)	Use one of your powers as if the mecha was your own body.
Need for Speed	Halves your high-speed modifier for special movement modes.
Quick Transformation (+)	You engage your mecha's alternate forms much quicker.
Skill Feats	
Top Gun (+)	You gain a +4 bonus to Pilot checks in two special maneuvers.

MECHA PILOT PROFICIENCY — GENERAL, OPTIONAL

Instead of a specialty skill, a GM can ask that all heroes who wish to pilot mecha acquire this feat. This feat allows them to use their Pilot skill bonus towards controlling a mecha, without the –4 penalty that nonproficient use of anything imposes on related rolls (in this case, Pilot). Including this feat is more appropriate when the setting includes "free" mecha; that is, when the heroes do not spend their own points to purchase a mecha, but rather have access to one through an in-game organization.

MECHA WEAPON PROFICIENCY — GENERAL, OPTIONAL

Under the same circumstances for adding a proficiency feat to pilot mecha, using the super-heavy weapons they can wield can require a proficiency feat as well. The GM can declare that in the series, nonproficient use of mecha weapons, mounted or wielded, imposes a –4 penalty to attack rolls. If so, this feat eliminates that penalty.

MECHA ATTUNEMENT — GENERAL, RANKED

You can synchronize with your mecha to the extent that it truly feels like an extension of your own self. Each rank of this feat allows you to use one of your powers with the mecha, as if it were your own body. Powers with a Personal range can affect you or your mecha (not both at the same time), and those with a Touch range can be triggered by the mecha's hands. Perception range includes the mecha's sensor systems, and line of sight and cover is calculated as if you were the mecha. You are still limited by the setting's power level. If you select a power that is part of an array, you can use all the powers in the array. You can combine the effects of this feat and the Channel (Trait) feature, although you do not gain any additional benefit if your mecha can channel the same trait as the one you can attune to.

NEED FOR SPEED — GENERAL

You have nerves of steel and lightning reflexes when piloting a mecha at high speeds. When engaging in a special movement mode like Flight Systems, Ground Speed, Underground Speed, or Water Speed, your high-speed modifier is halved (see **Maneuvering Skills** in the next section).

QUICK TRANSFORMATION — GENERAL, RANKED

You can activate the reconfiguration systems of a transformable mecha while still performing amazing stunts with it. Choose one of the following features when gaining this feat: Mechamorph, Composite, or all movement modes. For each rank in this feat, reduce the action required to activate the feature by one step (full to standard, standard to move, move to free, and free to reaction). For movement modes, this reduction applies to the action needed to switch between different movement modes. The action required for a composite mecha to assemble is determined by the slowest element in the composite. Regardless of the action needed, you can only use the chosen feature once until the beginning of your next turn. Additional ranks can be assigned to the other two features, if the mecha has them.

TOP GUN SKILL, RANKED

Choose two maneuvers from the list in the **Maneuvering Skills** section on page 75. When performing a skill check on board a mecha to perform these maneuvers, you gain a +4 bonus to the roll. An additional rank allows you to choose two more maneuvers or eliminate the need to make a skill check for previously chosen maneuvers.

MECHA COMBAT

It is inevitable that mecha will see combat, regardless of their type or purpose. Because they have a humanoid configuration, mecha fight just like heroes do, although their hybrid status as vehicles and machines bring more factors into the picture.

ACTIONS

A mecha can perform the same types of action as a hero: full, standard, move, free, and reaction. However, with no self-awareness, it is the pilot who takes the actions for the mecha.

As a pilot, you have the same actions available to you as you would outside the mecha. A move action lets you move the mecha or activate some systems, a standard action lets you perform any attack you're capable with your traits, etc.

Being inside a mecha gives you more action alternatives. For example, rather than use a move action to run from one point to another, you can decide to perform a sensor scan with a Computers check. For outside observers, the mecha is standing still on the battlefield for the brief few seconds that you are doing something else inside the cockpit.

Some actions can be limited, depending on the mecha's designs and features. You can shout all you want with a free action, but unless the mecha has a communications system, only the people next to you will hear.

MOVEMENT

Mecha with legs can move at different speeds, depending on their size, as given in the **Mecha Sizes Table**. This speed can be increased by the Improved Leg Actuators feature. Use this speed when calculating the mecha's accelerated and all-out paces, as well as the distance it can travel with a charge.

Most mecha, however, will have an alternate mode of movement, such as vehicle-like ground speed, flight, or less common modes like burrowing. When engaging such movement modes, the mecha stops behaving as a hero and begins moving as a vehicle. This makes little difference unless the mecha has a drawback like Stall Speed or Full Power attached to their movement, which means that once they start moving like a vehicle, they cannot stop unless they switch back to moving like a normal bipedal creature. Engaging or disengaging a movement mode is a move action.

HANDLING

The real difference between a hero with an innate Growth power and a normal character inside a mecha comes with the mecha's handling modifier. Unless you are using power armor, a mecha's system takes your movements and extrapolates their strength and speed to fit the power of its much larger limbs. Compensating for this difference in leverage and sheer potency requires skill; namely, the Pilot skill.

As described in the **Mecha Size Traits** table, a mecha's size imposes a penalty called a handling modifier. The bigger the mecha is, the harder it is to control it. A mecha's handling modifier applies to attack and initiative rolls, to Defense, and to maneuvering skill checks.

INITIATIVE, ATTACK, AND DEFENSE

These three combat bonuses suffer the most from a mecha's handling modifier, as they come directly from your own traits, and you may be restricted by the setting's power level. You can be a snappy sharpshooter on foot, but your maximized +7 attack bonus becomes a –1 if you are trying to shoot a Colossal mecha's weaponry.

Mecha can reduce their handling modifier's impact on these traits by increasing their Dexterity, representing a lighter, more agile build. Alternatively, all of these can be made worse by the Hard Controls drawback.

MANEUVERING SKILL

For the purpose of controlling mecha, a maneuvering skill is any skill that allows you to perform mecha maneuvers that would require such a check. The most common maneuvering skill is Pilot, but some mecha features allow you to move their bulk with Acrobatics. Regardless of the skill required, the mecha's size imposes its handling modifier on the checks. Climb, Escape Artist, and even Ride are additional skills that might be used instead of, or in addition to, Pilot and Acrobatics, depending on the movement used.

The only time the pilot has to make a maneuvering skill check is when attempting a physical action that involves exertion and harmful consequences due to failure or to perform an action that a 20-ton machine would find reasonably challenging. There are six types of maneuvers: trivial (DC 5), easy (DC 10), moderate (DC 15), difficult (DC 20), challenging (DC 25), and extreme (DC 30). Note that the mecha's handling modifier affects maneuvering skill checks, which could make even a trivial maneuver an extreme one, if the pilot is not up to the task.

If you fail a maneuvering skill check by less than five points, you simply can't execute the maneuver you were trying to perform. Results vary with the situation, but at the very least, you lose the failed action for your turn. If you fail by five points or more, the mecha gains the Uncontrolled condition.

HIGH-SPEED MODIFIER

A pilot can maneuver a mecha at normal, walking, and running speeds without too much thought, but engaging a high-speed mode cuts down



POWER ARMOR

Mecha of Medium size are power armor for normal humanoid heroes. They do not have the same capacity as bigger mecha, and therefore, they are treated more as equipment than as vehicles. They are more akin to a suit of armor you don to augment your abilities, rather than a craft you climb in and control. Because of this, power armor does not follow the special rules for mecha. A hero in power armor fights like a normal character with boosted traits.

UNCONTROLLED MANEUVERS

Sometimes, a pilot attempts such an extreme maneuver that he cannot avoid losing control of the mecha. An uncontrolled mecha careens wildly or stalls. While uncontrolled, a mecha moves at the same speed it was traveling or half its full speed, whichever is less, in whatever movement mode it was engaged in when gaining the condition and at a random direction decided by the GM. The mecha also loses its dodge bonus to Defense, cannot avoid collisions, and suffers a –2 modifier to Defense (does not stack with the –2 penalty from being stunned). A pilot cannot disengage an uncontrolled mecha's movement mode until regaining control. The pilot can try to regain control as a reaction; this is a maneuvering skill check DC 15. The uncontrolled condition remains until the pilot regains control or the mecha crashes to a stop.

reaction times severely, demanding more concentration and skill. When engaging a special movement mode such as Flight Systems, Ground Speed, Underground Speed, or Water Speed, you incur a high-speed modifier to the DC of maneuvering skill checks. This modifier is equal to the movement mode's current rank, using the next highest rank that describes the mecha's speed. A mecha that can fly at a top speed of 250 mph (**Flight Systems 5**) might choose to fly at 50 mph (**Flight Systems 3**), making its high-speed modifier +3. Engaging at an accelerated pace increases the modifier by two, and engaging in an all-out pace increases it by three.

MANEUVERING CHECKS

A pilot makes a maneuvering check in the following circumstances:

- *Acrobatics:* Mecha lack the instincts for balance, managing their own weight, and reacting to their own movement. Unless the mecha has the Neural/Spirit Interface, all tasks that would require an Acrobatics check ask for a Pilot check instead. The DCs are the same as for any other hero, considering the handling modifier factor. Performing acrobatic stunts at high speeds incurs a high-speed modifier to all DCs.
- *Avoid Collision:* A mecha can collide if another mecha or vehicle is trying to ram it or an unexpected obstacle gets in its way. To avoid slams and rushes, the pilot makes a maneuvering skill check as a reaction opposed to the attacker's own maneuvering check, avoiding the collision altogether if successful. To avoid crashing by accident with mobile and immobile obstacles, the DC for avoiding a collision goes from DC 5 (against an object one category smaller than the mecha) to DC 20 (against an object two or more size categories larger), adding the mecha's high-speed modifier to the DCs.
- *Drop Prone and Stand Up*: Despite being inconsequential actions for a humanoid hero, the simple act of dropping to the ground and getting back on its feet involves very precise engineering for a mecha, whose pilot must balance a strange center of gravity with muscles that respond differently. Getting down voluntarily as a move action is an easy (DC 10) task and a moderate (DC 15) task to do it as a free action; the mecha goes down whether the pilot succeeds or fails but, if successful, the DC for standing up is reduced by 5. Getting up as a move action is an easy (DC 10) task and a challenging (DC 25) task to do it as a free action. If the hero has the Instant Up feat or the mecha has the Free-bearing Hip Joint feature, there is no need for a check to get up.
- *Extra Effort:* A pilot can try to squeeze more power out of his mecha. The pilot can exert himself normally, but he must make a maneuvering check (DC 15) to use Extra Effort with any of the mecha's features or weapons. After a successful extra effort, the mecha becomes fatigued (not the pilot) as its frame overheats, unless the pilot spends a hero point to avoid this. A pilot can exert extra effort for both himself and the mecha at the same time, and the penalties for fatigued conditions stack for tasks involving the mecha.
- *Flight:* Mecha that can fly have a third dimension to add to their maneuvering. While in an atmosphere, a flying mecha moves at double speed while diving down and at half speed when climbing up. These new speeds define what the mecha considers accelerated and all-out paces.
- *High Speed Turns:* A mecha moving at its normal walk speed handles turns and twists normally, but when moving at its top speed, the mecha's balance dynamic changes, and what were simple maneuvers become dangerous stunts. Any sharp turn while moving at an accelerated or all-out pace requires a maneuvering skill check. The DC for this check is as follows:

  Base DC + high-speed modifier + angle modifier = maneuvering check DC

  The base difficulty for each check is DC 10 for accelerated pace and DC 15 for all-out pace. The angle modifier equals +0 for 0-45 degree turns, +1 for 46-90 degree turns, +2 for 90-degree turns, +3 for 91-179 degree turns, and +5 for turns of 180 degrees.
- *Outmaneuver:* When two mecha fight, the superior pilot will regularly gain the upper hand. As a move action, you can make an opposed maneuvering skill check. If your opponent is not a mecha or a vehicle, it can use Acrobatics, Notice, or Sense Motive to oppose your maneuvering skill check, or even a power check using any movement-related powers such as Flight. If you succeed, you gain a temporary +2 bonus to your next attack roll, a +1 bonus to the damage bonus of your next attack (whether it succeeds or not) or a +2 bonus to Defense until the start of your next turn. These bonuses are not limited by power level, but they only apply against the opponent you outmaneuvered.
- *Ramming*: A mecha can charge at enemies and use its great mass as a weapon. This is a normal charge, overrun, or slam action. The target can avoid this with an opposed maneuvering skill check, as per the avoid collision maneuver. If a collision occurs, the mecha automatically gains the uncontrolled condition.
- *Space:* In space, there is no up and down. However, inertia has a free rein. All mecha in space can gain the Move-by Action feat, if they are equipped with the Zero-G Thrusters feature and the pilot succeeds at a maneuvering skill check DC 15, representing how a mecha can turn around at will and keep moving in the same direction. The GM may grant this option to airborne mecha in a more cinematic series. If a pilot already has the Move-by Action, he doesn't need to make a maneuvering check to use it.
- *Shake Lock:* If your mecha is currently target-locked, you can shake the hold of the sensor on you by making a maneuvering skill check as a free action, opposed by the potential attacker's Computers or Notice check. You must be aware of the target lock through your own sensor array.

DAMAGE AND REPAIR

As a construct, a mecha only has a lethal damage track and is immune to nonlethal damage. A mecha can gain a nonlethal track of sorts with the Unstable Power Source drawback, but the "damage" it records is "power damage" that threatens its power supply and may force it to shut down. This section describes how to handle damage for mecha.

DAMAGING CREW

Normally, a mecha's pilot is safe from damage the mecha suffers, and he cannot be attacked. For all combat purposes, the target is the mecha, not the pilot. However, drawbacks like Exposed Cockpit, Damage Feedback, and Parasitic Power Source can take their toll on the pilot. The only chance a pilot has of being damaged inside a mecha without the aforementioned drawbacks is when an attack scores a critical hit against the mecha (see **Critical Hits** in this section).

CRITICAL HITS AND AIMED SHOTS (OPTIONAL)

When an attack scores a critical hit against a mecha, the attacker has the option to increase the attack's damage bonus by +5 as normal or inflict normal damage and disable part of the mecha with the "leftover" critical damage. Roll a die and compare the result to the following table to see what part of the mecha is disabled. A mecha immune to critical hits is also immune to this option. Hitting the same location more than once during the same battle causes the effects of each critical hit to stack with the others.

Instead of leaving it to chance, you can try and hit a particular part of the mecha. This requires the Precise Shot feat to even try, or an equivalent targeting system like the Optical Tracking or Target Tracking Interface features. Declare a system or part of a mecha that you want to hit before making an attack roll. The targeted part's Defense is equal to the mecha's Defense +5. If your aimed shot hits, you disable the targeted part and deal normal damage to your target. The cockpit and the head have a Defense trait equal to the mecha's Defense +10.

Any member of the mecha's crew can attempt to bring the disabled system back online as a Craft or Computers check performed as a full action, with a DC equal to 10 + the disabling attack's damage bonus.

DAMAGE CONDITIONS

A mecha suffers damage from lethal attacks normally, using its Toughness bonus, which combines the innate strength of its structure and other defensive features like Armor and Shields Generator.

- **Injured:** Injured conditions mean that the mecha is damaged, suffering scratches and dents.
- **Disabled:** When a mecha is Disabled, it shuts down. A pilot must make a maneuvering skill check at DC 10 each round to get it to perform simple actions and DC 20 to perform strenuous actions. A failed check does not knock the mecha into the Dying condition, but instead makes it Fatigued or Exhausted. If the mecha *does* suffer more damage, it becomes Dying.
- **Dying:** When a mecha gains this condition, it breaks down. It cannot be reactivated until it has been repaired. The mecha is "stable" and does not need to make any check to avoid total destruction, but if it suffers any damage while in this condition, it is permanently destroyed and irreparable; at that point, the only thing anyone can hope for is to salvage some parts to work on another mecha.
- **Fatigued:** A "fatigued" mecha is overheating, and its systems have taken too much abuse after being forced to work while Disabled or pushed beyond its technical specifications by extra effort. Failing a maneuvering check while fatigued makes the mecha Exhausted.
- **Exhausted:** An "exhausted" mecha's systems can barely keep it going after being further pushed past its safety limits. Failing a maneuvering check while Exhausted imposes the Disabled condition. If the mecha was already Disabled when becoming Exhausted, it instead becomes Dying.

Note that these fatigued and exhausted conditions are *not* the same kind of conditions that characters can suffer; they just impose the same kinds of penalties. The only way that a mecha acquires these conditions is through being active while Disabled and by specific mecha drawbacks. A mecha is still immune to the Fatigue and Exhaustion that living things can suffer from.

MECHA REPAIR

A mecha cannot recover by itself from any damage condition. A trained mechanic must repair it or jury-rig it back into action. This is a Craft check (DC 20) using the specialty best suited for the mecha's base technology (usually mechanical, but electronic and structural are also possible). Use the Repair skill if it is available in the setting.

Repairing the Fatigued and Exhausted conditions require one hour of work each, but if the mecha is left to cool down for 10 hours, both conditions repair by themselves.

Repairing a Dying condition requires a full week of work. Repairing the Disabled condition requires one day of work, and repairing one Injured condition requires one hour of work. A destroyed mecha (as per the Volatile drawback) can become Dying with two weeks of constant reconstruction.

A skilled mechanic can jury-rig a quick fix while the mecha is still in operation, either from an improvised scaffolding (the mechanic may be asked to make Acrobatics checks to avoid being thrown off) or from a crew position inside the mecha itself. A jury-rig's Craft DC is 10, but the check is modified by the mecha's injured conditions. It takes a full action to repair any condition the mechanic wants to get rid of. If repairing the

MECHA CRITICAL HITS

DIE RESULT	LOCATION	EFFECT
1-3	Leg	Choose one leg at random. You can cause the mecha to fall (if bipedal) or impose a –4 penalty to maneuvering skill checks until repaired.
4-6	Arm	Choose one arm at random. You can disarm the mecha of anything it is holding or impose a –4 penalty to attack rolls with that arm until repaired.
7-10	Torso	You stun the mecha for one round, after which it is dazed and then recovers.
11-12	Head	You impose a –4 penalty to all Notice and Computers checks related to sensor systems.
13-15	Specific system (GM chooses)	The GM chooses a base system. If the mecha fails a Toughness check against the attack's normal damage, the system is disabled. If successful, a complementary system of the same category is disabled instead.
16-18	Specific system (attacker chooses)	The attacker chooses a base system. If the mecha fails a Toughness check against the attack's normal damage, the system is disabled. If successful, a complementary system of the same category is disabled instead.
19-20	Cockpit	The damage transfers to the pilot, who suffers the same damage condition that the mecha did.

Disabled and Dying conditions, for every 5 points by which the Craft check result exceeds the DC, the jury-rig also removes one Injured condition. As per the normal rules, the jury-rig is temporary, and the conditions return once the encounter is over (safe return to headquarters can be part of the encounter). A mecha cannot be permanently destroyed when the jury-rigged conditions return by the end of the encounter and it is Dying; they just stack and make the real repairs take longer. A mecha can only be jury-rigged once per encounter.

Repairing power damage from the Unstable Power Source drawback works the same, except for the times involved. Repairing the Unconscious condition takes a full day of work, the Staggered condition requires one hour, and each Bruised condition requires one minute. Unlike real physical damage, power damage can receive as many jury-rigs as the mechanic can afford, as he manually reroutes energy during the encounter, even if this means the power source is nigh-irreparable due to all the accumulated conditions that return when the encounter is over.

SAMPLE MECHA

The following are iconic models of common mecha found throughout manga and anime. Like archetypes, you are free to customize their traits to fit your series more accurately.

SABER MECHSUIT MARK IV

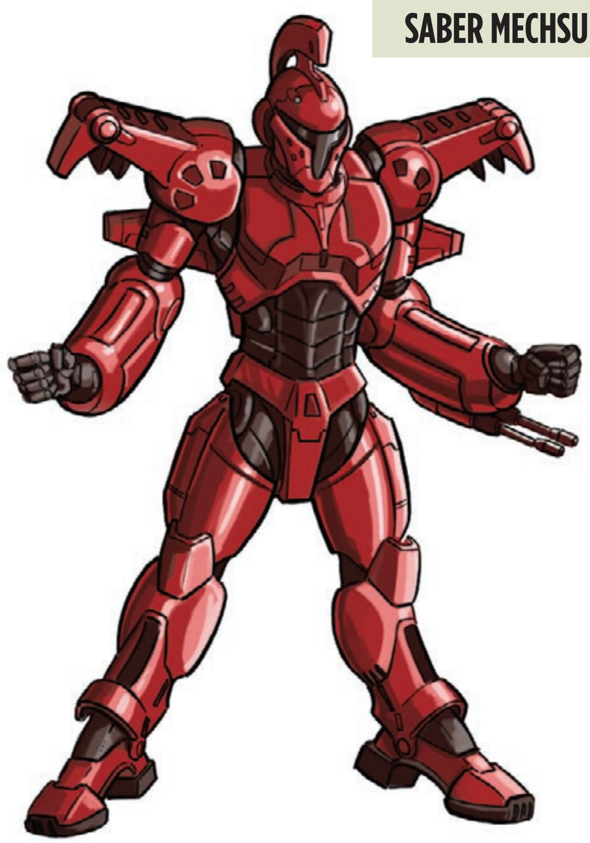
The Saber is the unofficial standard power armor in many sci-fi settings, with versions existing for crowd control, SWAT operations, special forces missions, and even criminal activities. The basic construction allows for customization, and it's not rare to find Saber models sporting melee weapons as well as heavy firearms and even light artillery. Standard users of Saber mechsuits operate in small teams, but heavily armed and armored models allow a single elite operative to act as a one-man army.

SPECIAL TACTICS ARMORED UNIT (STAU)

The pilot of this humanoid mini-tank is a fearsome force on any futuristic battlefield. Its increased size and capacity allow this mecha to carry a bigger, meaner arsenal than any single trooper could ever hope to carry, with the maneuverability necessary to carry it even behind enemy lines, for maximum damage. While the STAU can operate on its own in special missions, by installing specialized equipment, it is most often deployed in small squads in major wartime operations. Toned-down models are available for law enforcement, but the black market sells equivalent versions to criminal and terrorist organizations, usually the kind with the necessary premises and resources for their upkeep and covert transportation.

MF-15 RAPTOR

This multi-purpose war machine revolutionized atmospheric and space warfare, introducing a high degree of versatility without sacrificing firepower. Its three modes of operation—space fighter, walker, and humanoid—allow the MF-15's pilot to switch between different modes of combat at will, from high-speed dog-fighting to tactical maneuverability and devastating ground operations. Because of this flexibility, the rules of mecha combat are constantly being rewritten, as pilots improvise maneuvers and tactics, surprising allies and enemies alike.



SABER MECHSUIT



S.T.A.U.

SABER MECHSUIT MARK IV — TL 4

STR: 12* (+6[1]) **DEX: 12* (+6[1])** **TOUGHNESS SAVE: +5[1]**

Type: Power Armor	**Size:** Medium
Handling Modifier: +0	**Speed:** +30 ft.[1]

Base Features: Armor 5, Enhanced Dexterity 12, Enhanced Strength 12, Improved Plating 2 (critical hits), Jump Rockets 3, Reactive Camouflage

Complementary Features: Base Comms 4 (radio; Area; Selective, Subtle), Base Sensors 9 (extended hearing, extended sight, radius [radar]; blindsight [radar], radio, ultravision, infravision), Improved Leg Actuators 3, Recording Equipment

Weapon Systems: The Saber Mechsuit Mark IV has the following weapons:
Monocarbon Blade: **Strike 7** (mounted, slashing, mounted on the left wrist; Mighty, Penetrating)
Machine Gun Attachment: **Blast 6** (mounted, ballistic, mounted on right wrist; Autofire, Total Fade; Fades; Accurate, Reloading 2)

Combat: Attack +2[1] (machine gun attachment), Grapple +6[1], Damage +6[1] (unarmed), +7[1] (blade), +6 (machine gun)

Abilities 24 + Base Systems 11 + Complementary Systems 4 (17 points) + Weapons 30 = 68 (Devices/Equipment 14)

[1] This trait adds to the pilot's corresponding trait, within power limits.
*Enhanced Trait, not standalone score

SPECIAL TACTICS ARMORED UNIT (STAU) — TL 4

STR: 30 (+10) **DEX: 12 (+1)** **TOUGHNESS SAVE: +8**

Size: Large	**Type:** Mobile Suit
Handling Modifier: +0	**Speed:** 35 ft.

Base Features: Armor 6 (Impervious 3 ranks only), Cloak System 2 (all radio senses), Flight Systems 4 (Limited to a 1,000 ft. altitude), Improved Plating 2 (critical hits), Precise Handling

Complementary Features: Base Comms 5 (radio; Area; Selective, Subtle), Base Sensors 9 (blindsight [radar], extended hearing, infravision, extended sight, radius [radar]; radio, ultravision), Datalink, Environmental Optimization (urban), IFF Transponder, Profile Database, Profile Entry 2 (military mecha, armored vehicles), Recording Equipment, Weapon Mount (hold rocket launcher)

Weapon Systems: The STAU has the following weapons:
Pulse Rifle: **Blast 8** (handheld, ballistic; Autofire)
High-Impact Rocket Launcher: **Blast 10** (handheld, explosive; Improved Range [250 ft.])

Combat: Attack +0[1], Grapple (pilot's attack bonus +14), Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +0[1], Knockback –11, Initiative +0[1]

Drawbacks: Activation (1 minute to initialize systems –1 point), Control Requirements (pilot requires Mecha Pilot Proficiency feat or suffer a –4 penalty to all rolls, –1 point), Damage Feedback (pilot is damaged when mecha is disabled, DC 10 + damage, uncommon, moderate, –2 points)

Size 13 + Abilities 14 + Base Systems 20 + Complementary Systems 5 (22 ranks) + Weapons 27 – Drawbacks 4 = 75 (Devices/Equipment 15)

[1] This trait adds to the pilot's corresponding trait, within power level limits.

MF-15 RAPTOR (HUMANOID) — TL 5

STR: 35 (+12) **DEX: 18 (+4)** **TOUGHNESS SAVE: +10**

Size: Gargantuan	**Handling Modifier:** +0	**Speed:** 45 ft.

Base Features: Advanced Onboard Computer System (+2 to Computers), Armor 4, Environmental Seal 2, Flight Systems 7, Mechamorph 2 (walker and space fighter, see sidebox), Precise Handling, Target Tracking Interface (gattling gun pod)

Complementary Features: Base Comms 10 (radio; Area; Selective, Subtle), Base Sensors 4 (extended radar, radius [radar]; distance sense, radio), Countermeasures 8 (heat-seeking missiles), Countermeasures 8 (radar-guided missiles), Ejector Seat, Electromagnetic Seal, IFF Transponder, Improved Control Interface, Jamming 4 (radar), Profile Database, Zero-G Thrusters

Weapon Systems: The MF-15 Raptor has the following weapon.
Gattling Gun Pod: **Blast 10** (handheld, ballistic; Autofire; Improved Critical 2 (18-20), Improved Range [250 ft.])

Combat: Attack +0[1], Grapple (pilot's attack power+24, humanoid and walker forms), +32 (space fighter mode), Damage +12 (unarmed), +10 (laser cannon, space fighter and walker mode only), +10 (micro-missiles, space fighter and walker mode only), +10 (guided missiles, space fighter and walker mode only), +10 (gattling gun, humanoid and walker mode only), Defense +0 (humanoid mode), –2 (walker form), 6 (space fighter mode), Knockback –17 (humanoid and walker forms), –22 (space fighter mode)

Drawbacks: Activation (5 minutes to initialize systems, –2 points), Control Requirements (pilot requires Mecha Pilot Proficiency feat or suffer a –4 penalty to all rolls, –1 point), Exposed Cockpit (partial concealment without cover, –2 points)

Size 37 + Abilities 9 + Base Systems 25 + Complementary Systems 8 (40 points) + Weapons 15 – Drawbacks 5 = 89 (Device/Equipment 18)

SPACE FIGHTER MODE (VEHICLE)*

Strength 50 (+20), Speed (flight) 12, Defense 6, Toughness 11, Gargantuan; Mechamorph 2 (humanoid and walker), Advanced Onboard Computer System, Environmental Seal 2; same complementary features as humanoid form; *micro-missile pods:* **Blast 10** (explosive; Cluster, Total Fade; Fades, Fast Fade; *Alternate Powers: guided missiles* **Blast 10** [explosive; Guided by radio, Total Fade; Fades, Fast Fade], *anti-aircraft laser cannon:* **Blast 10** [energy]); same drawbacks as humanoid form.

Strength 2 + Speed 24+ Size 3 + Features 13 + Weapons 22 – Drawbacks 5 = 59 equipment/mecha points

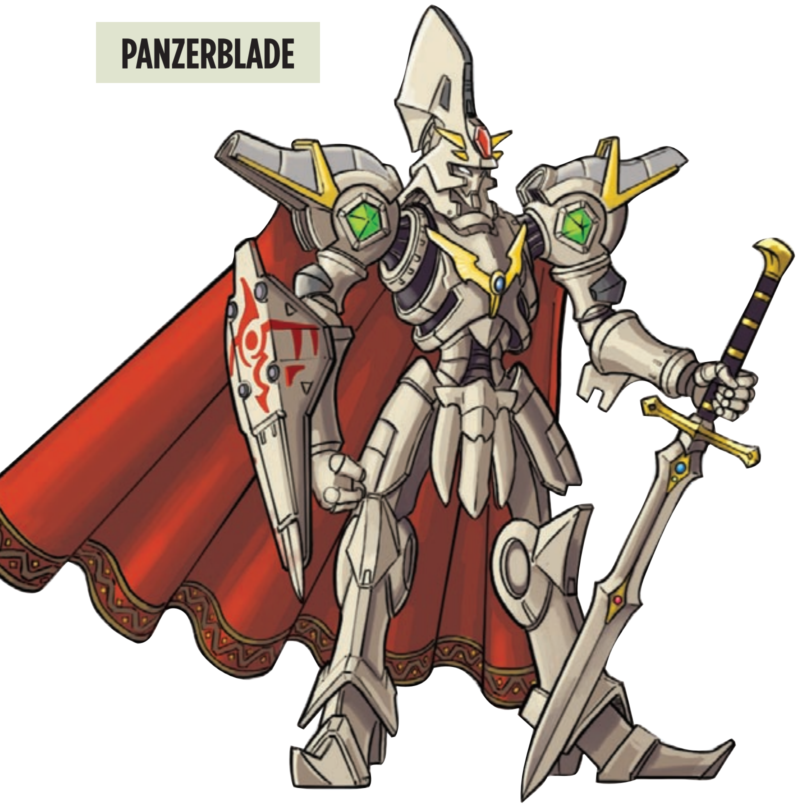
WALKER MODE (MECHA)

Strength 30 (+10), Dexterity 14 (+2, handling penalty –2); Walk Speed 20 ft., Toughness 10, Gargantuan; Advanced Onboard Computer System, Armor 4, Environmental Seal 2, Flight Systems 9, Mechamorph 2 (humanoid and space fighter); same complementary features as humanoid form; *micro-missile pods:* **Blast 10** (explosive; Cluster, Total Fade; Fades, Fast Fade; *Alternate Powers: guided missiles* **Blast 10** [explosive; Guided by radio, Total Fade; Fades, Fast Fade], *anti-aircraft laser cannon:* **Blast 10** [energy]); same drawbacks as humanoid form plus Disability (walk speed halved, 1).

Size 37 + Abilities 0 + Base Systems 27 + Complementary Systems 8 + Weapons 22 – Drawbacks 6 = 89 points

[1] This trait adds to the pilot's corresponding trait, within power level limits.
* Purchased as a vehicle; see **Vehicles** in page 142 of *Mutants & Masterminds*

PANZERBLADE



PANZERBLADE

The terror of any fantasy medieval battlefield, the Panzerblade is operated by the strongest and most skilled of warriors, who are able to translate their fighting prowess to its mechanical limbs through a series of gears and pulleys, as well as secret alchemical reactions. Impervious to the feeble attacks of swords and arrows, the Panzerblade is the ultimate siege engine, although its most prominent use is to combat the forces of evil that terrorize the land, putting a brave hero on equal footing with the gigantic monsters spawned from the blackest depths of the world.

KERBERALTES

Its origin is unknown, its purpose is a mystery, but as far as the public knows, Kerberaltes is the only thing standing between humanity and oblivion at the hands of equally alien and monstrous invaders. Only the select few people who work for an international task force know that Kerberaltes charges a price for its stewardship of Earth, and that price is the soul of an innocent to empower it. This mystical guardian bonds with its pilot, making use of complicated controls unnecessary. With each battle, the pilot risks having his or her soul consumed, lost to the sheer power of Kerberaltes's mystical powers.

TITANZOR-V

Whether the product of mad science or visionary inspiration, Titanzor-V serves the cause of justice, generally by flattening the opposition under its mighty heels. As part of a team of talented crime fighters, Titanzor-V is deployed when the going gets tremendously tough, able to thwart the maddest schemes of the enemies of peace, from triggered earthquakes to sabotaged nuclear plants, including any other giant robot an evil international crime syndicate is able to put together to hold a city hostage.

PANZERBLADE TL 2

STR: 25 (+7) DEX: 12 (+1) TOUGHNESS SAVE: +8

Size: Large | **Handling Modifier:** +0 | **Speed:** 35 ft.

Base Features: Armor 4 (Impervious), Channel Magic, Improved Plating 10 (fire, magic), Weapon Mount 1 (sword holdings on the back)

Complementary Features: Autonomous Defense Actuators, Base Comms 6 (magic), Base Sensors 9 (magic awareness, extended sight, radius [sight], danger sense [magic awareness], detect evil, detect spellcasting), Neural/Spirit Interface 2 (physical skills and feats)

Weapon Systems: The Panzerblade has the following weapon:
Giant Zweihänder: **Strike 8** (handheld; Extended Reach, Mighty)

Combat: Attack –1[1], Grapple (pilot's attack bonus +12), Damage +8 (unarmed), +15 (giant zweihänder, limited by power level), Defense –1[1], Knockback –11, Initiative –1[1]

Drawbacks: Damage Feedback (pilot is damaged when mecha is disabled or stunned, DC 10 + damage, common, moderate, –3 points), Parasitic Power Source (–4 points)

Size 13 + Abilities 9 + Base Systems 20 + Complementary Systems 4 (20 points) + Weapons 6 – Drawbacks 7 = 45 (Device/Equipment 9)

[1] This trait adds to the pilot's corresponding trait, within power level limits.

KERBERALTES TL 4

STR: 38 (+14) DEX: 20 (+5) TOUGHNESS SAVE: +15/8*

Size: Colossal | **Handling Modifier:** –3 | **Speed:** 50 ft.

Base Features: Environmental Seal 2, Flight Systems 4, Profile Database, Shields Generator 7 (psychological repulsion; Impervious; Ablative)

Complementary Features: Base Comms 7 (radio; *Alternate Power:* Base Comms 6 [mental; Dimensional]), Base Sensors 9 (accurate and acute detect aliens, radius [sight]; communication link [pilot's best friend or significant other], detect invisible and insubstantial aliens as a free action at range), Electromagnetic Seal 2 (normal radiation and blocks aliens' insubstantial forms from entering the cockpit), Neural/Spirit Interface (maneuvering skills), Pinpoint Accuracy System (setting's alien invader species), Profile Entry (setting's alien invader species)

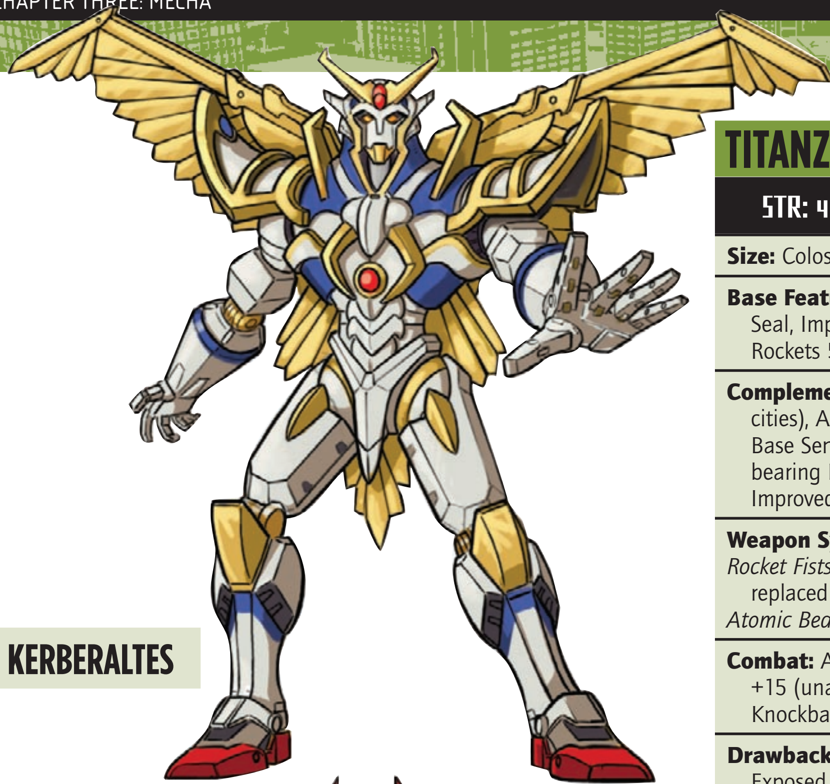
Weapon Systems: Kerberaltes has the following weapons:
Dimensional Fist: **Strike 1** (mounted, bludgeoning; Mighty, Affects Incorporeal 2)
Dimensional Vortex: **Super-Movement 10** (mounted, wills aliens in their alternate dimension to manifest to the pilot's, Alternate Will save DC 20; Attack, Burst Area; Linked [Nullify Insubstantial], Progression 4 [100-ft. area]), **Nullify Insubstantial 10** (mounted, Nullifying Field; Alternate Will save DC 20, Linked [Super-Movement], Progression 1 [100-ft. area])

Combat: Attack +0[1] (melee), –4[1] (ranged), Grapple (pilot's attack bonus +27), Damage +11 (unarmed), +14 (dimensional fist), Defense +0[1], Knockback –23 (–20 with Shields Generator down), Initiative –8[1]

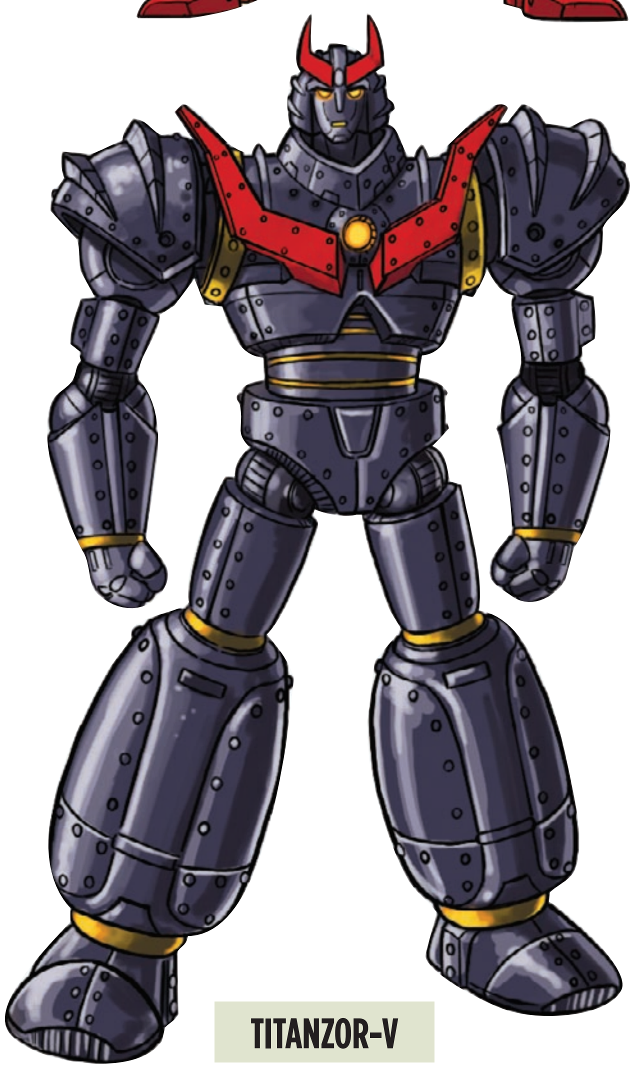
Drawbacks: Cursed (pilot is attacked by Drain Wisdom 5 when rolling a natural 20 or natural 1 with mecha attacks; common, major, –4 points), Damage Feedback (pilot is damaged when mecha is disabled or stunned, DC 10 + damage, common, moderate, –5 points)

Size 49 + Abilities 6 + Base Systems 18 + Complementary Systems 5 (23 ranks) + Weapons 49 + TL Difference (Neural Interface) +2 – Drawbacks 9 = 120 (Device/Equipment 24)

[1] This trait adds to the pilot's corresponding trait, within power level limits.
*with Shields Generator down.



KERBERALTES



TITANZOR-V

TITANZOR-V		TL 3
STR: 40 (+15)	DEX: 22 (+6)	TOUGHNESS SAVE: +15
Size: Colossal	**Handling Modifier:** –2	**Speed:** 120 ft.

Base Features: Armor 7, Emergency System Shutdown, Environmental Seal, Improved Plating 7 (critical hits, radioactive damage), Jump Rockets 5, Precise Handling, Underground Speed 2, Water Speed 2

Complementary Features: All-Terrain 3 (mountains, thick woods, cities), Autonomous Defensive Actuators 2, Base Comms 4 (radio), Base Sensors 6 (extended sight; radio, x-ray vision), Cargo Space, Free-bearing Hip Joint 2 (stand up as a free action without a skill check), Improved Control Interface, Improved Leg Actuators 7

Weapon Systems: Titanzor-V has the following weapons.
Rocket Fists: **Strike 15** (mounted, bludgeoning, fists fly out at a target, replaced by a normal set of fists; Thrown)
Atomic Beam: **Blast 12** (mounted, shot from the eyes, radioactive)

Combat: Attack –2[1], Grapple (pilot's attack bonus +31), Damage +15 (unarmed), +15 (rocket fists), +12 (atomic beam), Defense –2[1], Knockback –23, Initiative +2[1]

Drawbacks: Unstable Power Source (common, major –4 points), Exposed Cockpit (partial concealment without cover, –2 points)

Size 49 + Abilities 10 + Base Systems 26 + Complementary Systems 6 (28 ranks) + Weapons 40 – Drawbacks 6 = 125 (Device/Equipment 25)

[1] This trait adds to the pilot's corresponding trait, within power level limits.

ARCHETYPES IN MECHA SERIES

Mecha series have their own archetypes, in addition to the more common ones already described in **Chapter 2: Heroes**. The Ace Mecha Pilot and Mobile Trooper depend on the existence of mecha in a series, and therefore, they seldom appear in a setting without such great fighting machines.

ACE MECHA PILOT

When strange aliens invade the planet, war erupts between Earth and its colonies, or simply when fate needs a little extra firepower, the first and last line of defense are the capable mecha pilots on board their incredible machines. It doesn't matter if the mecha moves by cogs and steam or by alien biofibers, or whether it uses an ancient gigantic sword or the latest in plasma cannons, it's the skill of the pilot that will win the battle every time, even if he keeps losing the battles within.

Examples: *Allen Schezar from Vision of Escaflowne, Hibiki Tokai from Vandread, Milia Fallyna Jenius from Super Dimension Fortress Macross.*

MOBILE ARMOR TROOPER

Mecha pilots are the darlings of many an army, but the mobile armor trooper knows that the real work is done in the trenches, not in the skies. Encased in highly advanced armor, the trooper stands midway between heavy infantry and cavalry, for his power suit makes him more than human. Still, no advanced system will replace good training and sharp instincts, and the trooper is quite capable of surviving situations when his own skin is his only protection.

Examples: *Chirico Cuvie from Armored Trooper VOTOMS, Deunan Knute from Appleseed, the protagonists of Bubblegum Crisis and its remake Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040*

ACE MECHA PILOT — POWER LEVEL 8 (TL 5)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1
12	16	14	14	12	12

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+7/+5*	+8	+13	+7

*flat-footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+9), Computers 9 (+11), Concentration 6 (+7), Craft (mechanical) 8 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+10), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+10), Notice 9 (+10), Pilot 13 (+16), Survival 5 (+6)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Attack Focus (ranged), Attack Specialization (MF-15's gattling gun pod), Benefit 2 (lt. cmdr. rank in UN Space Force, mission access to a MF-15 Raptor mecha), Combat Reaction (make an outmaneuver maneuvering check to gain +2 to Defense when fired upon by missile fire), Defensive Roll 2, Dodge Focus 2, Environmental Adaptation (zero-g), Equipment 3, Evasion, Improved Initiative, Improved Outmaneuver[1], Luck, Man-Machine Interface (computers), Mecha Dogfighter[1], Mecha Pilot Proficiency[1], Move-by Action, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Quick Transform[1] 4 (Mechamorph), Second Chance (Pilot checks for tight turns at high speeds), Skill Mastery (Computers, Notice, Pilot, Survival), Top Gun[1] (avoid collision, shake lock), Uncanny Dodge (sight)

Equipment: Armored space pilot suit (Toughness +3, immunity to suffocation, hard pressure and vacuum), flashlight, GPS receiver, light pistol (damage +3, critical 20, ballistic, range increment 30 ft.) See page 79 for the traits of the **MF-15 Raptor**.

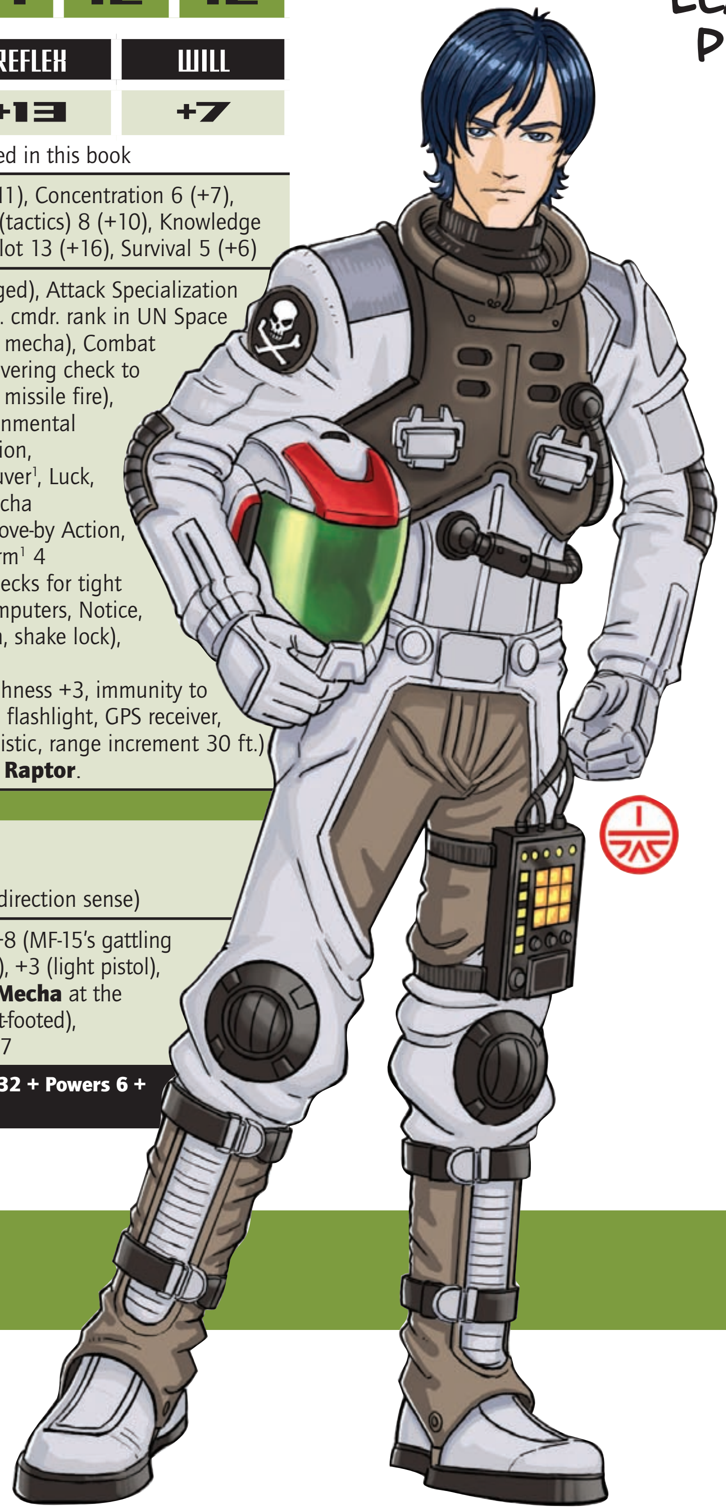
POWERS

Luck Control 1 (force re-roll)
Quickness 2 (One Type [physical])
Super-Senses 2 (danger sense [mental], direction sense)

Combat: Attack +5 (melee), +6 (ranged), +8 (MF-15's gattling gun), Grapple +6, Damage +1 (unarmed), +3 (light pistol), +10 (MF-15's gattling gun [see **Sample Mecha** at the end of this chapter]), Defense +8 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback –3 (–2 flat-footed), Initiative +7

Abilities 20 + Skills 18 (72 ranks) + Feats 32 + Powers 6 + Combat 22 + Saves 22 = 120

"ROGER, SKULL LEADER; IN THE PIPE, FIVE BY FIVE."



MOBILE ARMOR TROOPER — POWER LEVEL 10 (TL 4)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+3	+1	+1	+0
14	14	16	12	12	10

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+3*	+15	+10	+8

*without wetsuit, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Climb 10 (+12), Computers 8 (+9), Intimidate 10 (+10), Knowledge (civics) 4 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 11 (+12), Notice 12 (+13), Pilot 13 (+15), Stealth 11 (+13), Survival 9 (+10), Swim 8 (+10)

Feats: Ambidexterity, Attack Focus 4 (ranged), Diehard, Dodge Focus 6, Elusive Target, Endurance 2, Equipment 17, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Interpose, Master Plan, Mecha Pilot Proficiency, Mecha Dogfighter, Move-by Action, Uncanny Dodge (hearing)

Equipment: Light pistol (+3 damage, 30 ft. range, Small), shock-absorbent wetsuit (armor +3, immunity to critical hits), Special Tactics Armored Unit mobile suit, see **Sample Mecha** at the end of this chapter for details and additional traits (assuming the STAU is considered equipment in the Mobile Armor Trooper's setting), 4 points of other equipment

POWERS

Communication 6 (cyberimplant; radio; Area; Selective, Subtle)
Datalink 7 (cyberimplant, radio; Subtle)

Combat: Attack +6 (melee), +10 (ranged), Grapple +8, Damage +2 (unarmed), +3 (light pistol), +8 (STAU pulse rifle, only inside the mecha), +10 (STAU rocket launcher), Defense +10 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +2

Drawbacks: Conditional Ownership (can only use the STAU under the guidelines of the city's police department –2 points)

Abilities 18 + Skills 24 (96 ranks) + Feats 41 + Powers 22 + Combat 20 + Saves 27 – Drawbacks 2 = 150

"ALPHA TEAM, THREE HOSTILES AND ONE HOSTAGE; ON MY MARK..."



CHAPTER 4: MARTIAL ARTS



With their philosophical teachings, their unusual movements, and the outstanding feats of some of their practitioners, martial arts have captured the imagination of the world at large. Japan is the birthplace of many of the styles that the media made popular at the end of the 20th century; karate, judo, and aikido created the necessary suspension of disbelief for the public to accept the quasi-supernatural feats of ninjutsu and samurai swordsmanship. Shounen manga and anime exploited this and used the trappings of martial arts to create the closest thing that these media have to superheroes: martial artists.

FOLLOWERS OF THE WAY

Just as there are many martial arts styles, there are many kinds of martial artists in fiction, popular in their particular subgenres. What they all have in common is the self-discipline and talent they pour into learning ancient techniques and inventing new ones, whether it's a new type of kick that exploits the practitioner's speed or a new way to convert inner energy into concussive, explosive force.

THE WUXIA

The true seeds of the martial arts genre (as well as martial arts themselves) are not in Japan, but in its larger neighbor, China. We owe the portrayal of martial arts as entertainment to *wuxia*, a literary genre that narrates the exploits of masters of the martial arts, their secret underground world that rebelled against the strict Confucian regime of Imperial China, and the very personal conflicts that arose between them.

The term "wuxia" is similar to the concept of the knight-errant, with a literal meaning of "hero of the martial arts." A wuxia is a hero that uses his supreme skills in combat in the defense of the innocent, although evil wuxia serve as antagonists, as do evil nobles, bandits, and on a grander scale, ghosts, ogres, and demons.

The earliest example of the martial arts genre is the classic novel, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Written in the 14th century, it's a fictionalized account of the chaotic state of China during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. This novel portrays detailed descriptions of combat, even if its focus is the history, politics, and grand strategies of the kings and generals of the age. The novel and its period serve as a direct inspiration and background for the *Dynasty Warrior* videogame series.

The work that truly cemented the wuxia genre was, however, the novel *Water Margin*, compiled and written one century later. *Water Margin* is a collection of tales that follow the adventures of brigands and outlaws, all

FACT OR FICTION?

One of the most fascinating things about martial arts and their history are how they are perceived as a mix of real world history and practices with ancient legend and modern myth. Discussing the real aspects of martial arts is completely out of the scope of this book, so this chapter centers on martial arts in popular media, including books, movies, cartoons, comics, manga, anime, and even videogames. Any resemblance to real-world martial arts is just a coincidence.

of whom know martial arts, as they rebel against a corrupt government. The importance of this novel is that it sets down the main concepts of martial arts fiction, namely the code of the warrior, the brotherhood between martial artists, master-student relationships, martial arts sects, corrupt powers, and different martial arts styles.

Another influential work, which is part of the four classic novels of Chinese literature, next to *Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*, is *Journey to the West*, written in 1570. The story follows a monk as he travels to India to retrieve the holy Buddhist scriptures, aided by a trio of "disciples" that truly bring the fantastic into the genre. The most famous of these disciples is Sun Wokung, alias the Monkey King, whose extreme supernatural powers and fighting ability provide the spiritual tale with a good dose of action and adventure, as well as light-hearted moments, thanks to his mischievousness. *Journey to the West* has inspired a great number of fantasy and martial arts movies and TV series, both in China and Japan as well as in the Western world. Its most important contribution to manga and anime, though, was to serve as the inspiration to *Dragonball* (with a protagonist called Son Goku, a Japanization of the Monkey King's name), the manga by Akira Toriyama that became popular all over the world and was translated into many languages, establishing the image of the martial artist that could shatter even the Moon with a secret technique. Its sequel, *Dragonball Z*, had the villains destroying entire planets and the heroes training under the pressure of 100 gravities.

THE SAMURAI

The direct descendants of wuxia, samurai occupied a much more central spot in Japanese society than wuxia ever did in China, and thus they enjoyed more exposure. Samurai also were mostly instruments of the state, while the wuxia were in covert or open rebellion to the establishment.

Despite these differences, samurai fiction took the wuxia concept of honor and married it to the code of bushido, the Way of the Warrior. The intricacies of this code of honor and how it made people's lives complicated is a true spawning pool of story ideas. In a way, the samurai and wuxia genres have a lot in common with westerns, starring lone, righteous warriors in a lawless land. It's no surprise, then, that some of the classic westerns are actually remakes of samurai films; *The Magnificent Seven* is nothing but *The Seven Samurai* with guns, and Clint Eastwood in *A Fistful of Dollars* is doing a great impression of Toshiro Mifune in *Yojimbo*.

A particular icon that was born from those complications was the ronin, or masterless samurai. All samurai served a master, and it was their honor and life to do so; to be left without a master was a disgrace and the ruin of samurai. A popular story, called *The 47 Ronin*, narrates the misfortunes of a band of samurai who plotted revenge for their slain master, assuming the ronin lifestyle to slowly make their plans come true.

While the kung fu of the wuxia centered on unarmed combat and a plethora of exotic weapons, the samurai's art revolved around a single weapon: the sword. The katana is reputedly one of the best swords ever forged in history, and the samurai never parted with it, inventing many ways to use it and many forms in which to shape it. Legendary swordsman Miyamoto Musashi wrote in his *Book of Five Rings* that all such styles are just made to impress people; the true style is, to sum up his philosophy, the one in which you kill the other guy. Impressing people, though, is exactly the business of manga and anime, and the idea of different styles translated beautifully onto the page and the screen, giving samurai characters a distinct way of fighting as well as looks and personality, and it echoed the wuxia tradition of pitting different martial arts schools against each other to prove which is superior.

Samurai manga and anime start from the realistic, like *Lone Wolf and Cub* (manga and movie series), pass through the implausible, like *Rurouni Kenshin* (known in American TV as *Samurai X*), and end in the ridiculously over the top, like *Samurai Deeper Kyo*. Due to the subject matter, samurai stories tend to stick close to actual history, so if you want to run a samurai series, you better brush up a little on the history of Japan around the Sengoku, Edo (also called Tokugawa), and Meiji periods, which saw the rise, peak, and decline of the samurai caste, respectively. You don't need to be a scholar, though; manga and anime issue a wide-scope artistic license that gives you flexibility to play sci-fi samurai (*Samurai 7*), school life samurai (*Samurai Girl: Real Bout High School*), and even hip-hop samurai (*Samurai Champloo)*.

THE NINJA

An honorable mention of the martial arts genre belongs to Japan alone, and that is the mythic figure of the ninja. While secret orders of martial arts assassins (or their rumors) have existed since the early Chinese dynasties, it was the ninja that leapt out of the shadows and into the media. The ninja acquired a mythic stature, as their history was never recorded and most of their exploits were more hearsay and folktale than actual historical accounts. In the minds of scared shogunate guards, the ninja were capable of supernatural feats, such as walking over water and becoming winged shadows. Sometimes they were even considered tengu, mythological raven-like demons with supreme martial arts skills.

One of the main elements of a ninja story is the ninja clan. Ninja clans do have their roots in history, when ninja originated from outlaws and disenfranchised peasants. The most "famous" groups of ninja originated from the Iga and Kouga regions (and the manga *Basilisk* made the Iga and Kouga into full-fledged ninja clans), and it wasn't long before the feudal lords saw the use of warriors not bound by a code of honor that could be hired to perform the province's dirty work.

As portrayed in movies and manga, a ninja clan is a strict organization. Its facilities are hidden deep inside a forest and are very often a full village that doesn't exist on any map, complete with its own peasants and working class tending to the everyday needs of the ninja, who hire out and bring in the money. The clan has a patriarch or matriarch and a clear hierarchy based on age (as a normal clan would) as well as martial arts expertise. Strict rules prohibit ninja from leaving the village without permission, in a way giving the same chances for personal conflict that the samurai's code provides, as a young ninja may be forced to disobey the clan and become an outcast. The difference between a ronin and a runaway ninja is that the clan is very much actively trying to kill the ninja.

Another staple of ninja series is the importance of female ninja, called "kunoichi." The kunoichi is the symbol of female empowerment against a strict chauvinistic regime, and she doesn't need to disguise herself as a man (like samurai women in many stories) to gain the respect and fear of her ninja peers. In fact, kunoichi are portrayed wearing as little as possible, which also makes them the (sometimes very chauvinistically so...) sex symbols of the martial arts world.

American media suffered a ninja invasion in the '80s, with a collection of incredibly bad movies. Around the same time, Japan was reading the ninja adventures of *The Legend of Kamui*, made into an anime movie called *The Dagger of Kamui*, which are classics of the ninja sub-genre. They later assaulted the West with the distribution of *Ninja Scroll*, which put a supernatural gore spin to the adventures of semi-historical warrior Yagyu Jubei.

Comics adopted the ninja with glee, and many popular heroes can trace their backgrounds to some ninja order or another, such as Daredevil, Batman, and Elektra. The differences between a comics ninja and a manga ninja are profound, however. In Western comics, ninja characters are superb hand-to-hand fighters, specializing in stealth and trickery; they use a variety of weapons, tricks, and tools to fit different situations. They are, basically, the model for the Dark Knight of Gotham.

In manga, ninja characters are also magicians, illusionists, and bona fide superheroes with their own special powers attributed to ancient ninjutsu secrets. They activate these secret powers through a series of hand seals, gestures they perform with their hands and fingers, very much akin to the idea of magic spellcasting. Ironically, manga ninja do not use as many weapons as their comics equivalents, preferring to specialize in a single weapon, or a small group of weapons, much like the old wuxia did, but choosing much subtler and discrete tools, like the shuriken (the infamous throwing stars) and the kunai (funny little knives with a ring at the handle's bottom).

STREET FIGHTERS

Street fighting has more to do with chaotic brawling than martial arts, but ever since *Street Fighter* became the monolith of the fighting videogame genre, the concept of the irregular fighting master became popular.

If samurai and wuxia are the knights of the martial arts genre, then street fighters are the rogues and loose cannons, wandering around using their skills for personal gain and following a personal set of guidelines, instead of a strict code. Under the concept of "street fighter," any sort of person could become a martial artist powerhouse without anyone batting an eye. No longer needed were the remote monasteries or the traditional dojos where natural talent could evolve into superior fighting skills or where exiled and wandering masters were willing to teach young enthusiasts in back alleys.

Despite being so open, the street fighter concept is also limited. Most of the characters considered "street fighters" actually learned their styles in a traditional way and later somehow abandoned their traditions.

Improvised martial artists who gain their skill from accidental sources also fall under the "street fighter" concept; they can have the suppressed memories of a martial arts past life suddenly dominating their conscious mind, or they can come into the possession of a magical artifact that turns them into kung fu masters.

The main thing about street-fighting martial artists is that they aren't bound by an ancient code of conduct. If they follow any rules at all, these are new, and evil martial artists keep pushing their limits.

GUN FU GUNNERS

Gun fu may not be considered a "martial art" in the traditional sense, since all it does is make handling guns look cool. Then again, a "martial art" in the cinematic sense is all about making bashing heads look cool, so the master gunslingers who can do things with firearms that no other can do classify as martial artists. Like other martial arts, gun fu originates from Chinese action movies, particularly the work of John Woo, who brought his craft with him to Hollywood for the movies *Face Off* and *Mission: Impossible 2*. However, the best example of gun fu can be found in the movie *Equilibrium*, where gun fighting is truly taken to the heights of a well-studied practice.

There are not many gunslingers in manga and anime, but the few there are have some things in common. For one, they do not belong to any ancient tradition, and their techniques are mostly made up as they go, fitting the particular abilities of each gunfighter. Also, they favor "small" arms; that is,



guns that they can carry in one hand, although *very* large caliber pistols and sawed-off shotguns are popular. Wielding two weapons is also very common, with some gunners actually having a melee weapon in their main or off-hand, depending on preferences.

The trick of gun fu is not so much fancy moves; after all, getting a shot out pretty much seals the deal if you're aiming in the right direction. The secret of gun fu lies in superhuman reflexes and complete awareness of the battlefield. The most spectacular gunners share other martial artists' penchant to treat gravity as a suggestion rather than a universal constant, with walls becoming tactical tools for gaining new vantage points, and midair twists giving them wider fire arcs.

With no defined style, no recognized masters, and no established centers of learning, practitioners of gun fu teach themselves from many backgrounds. They can be bounty hunters, mercenaries, demonslayers, or just about any other vocation that requires skill, firepower, and a big load of attitude.

CHI BENDERS

Not quite a category on their own, chi-benders are an overlay to other types of martial artists, able to tap and harness a source of power that can be mystical, magical, or purely scientific, but all for their taking. This power is called *chi*, or "breath" in Chinese, but each series puts its own spin on it (as well as a new name), treating it as a purely external power that the martial artists brings into herself, a completely internal energy that can be molded and increased by training and discipline, or a combination of the two.

Regardless of its explanation and name in a particular series, chi gives martial artists the ability to perform superhuman feats of prowess. It is their chi that wuxia weave to make their footsteps lighter than air. Samurai channel theirs through the edge of their blades to cut through stone. The ninja use it as a tool to obscure their victims' minds.

Chi is the excuse for anything supernatural in a martial artist's arsenal, and it will be the descriptor for most of the powers chosen by a martial arts hero. A master attuned to the flows of chi can sense his enemies with his eyes closed, while others simply learn to concentrate it to create demolishing blasts of pure energy. In some series, chi will be inextricably linked with an elemental power, such as wind or fire, and in others, it will exist in a pure state that defies classification.

The best thing about chi in a manga or anime series is that a martial artist doesn't really need to have a deep philosophical or spiritual side; chi can be a tool anyone with the talent or will can learn how to use, and if it's widely accepted that chi mastery lets people perform the impossible, people will be open to accepting incredible stunts from heroes and villains alike.

Ultimately, the concept of chi serves to increase the powers of any martial artist, without having to come up with explanations like gamma rays, unlikely mutations, or radioactive spiders.

MARTIAL ARTS THEMES

While martial arts have infiltrated almost all the other action and adventure genres, there *is* actually a martial arts standalone genre with its own conventions, themes, and clichés, and it's a genre that literally reaches back *centuries*.

THE PATH OF INNER STRENGTH

The core of any martial art is to master the power within. Whether to simply gain superior speed or to learn how to concentrate ambient energy to shoot concussive blasts, the power of a martial artist is *inside* her.

The concept of *chi* will always have a place in any martial arts story, regardless of genre, tone, and power level, and understanding how it works and how it can be channeled is the basis of every technique, power, and attack.

Chi doesn't need to be a central part of the setting in order to influence its martial arts. The members of a high school's kendo club will never worry about perceiving the hidden flows of chi, but most of the time, they will recognize by sight the strength of their club's captain or admire the newcomer's natural talent. They will not call their innate qualities "chi," but they will certainly know when they're out of their league.

In settings where martial arts are a more integral part of the story (not only a minor element of the setting), chi is a phenomenon that is real enough for characters to know about it and actively work with it. Under these considerations, chi is an invisible force that pervades everything and is the fuel of life itself.

Chi flows inside people's bodies as much as it does in the outside world, and it follows definite paths and directions. A powerful martial artist will know how to increase the amount of chi that passes through her body and what she can store. She will also know how to interrupt, alter, or corrupt its flow in others, to cause them harm. Healing and medicine in a martial arts story is all about restoring the proper balance of chi, and this can extend even to lands corrupted by evil.

THE JIANG HU

This term refers particularly to the wuxia genre. It literally means "brotherhood of river and lake," in honor of the bandits that founded it and their devotion for their lands against tyrannical rule, but its implied meaning is simply, "the martial arts world." The jiang hu is the layer of society where martial artists operate. It has its own codes, rules, organizations, events, and personalities relevant only to those who take their martial arts seriously.

In the original wuxia stories, the jiang hu comprises a slice of the criminal underworld, resistance movements, monasteries, heroes, villains, and the rules of conduct that governed them, completely independent of the laws of the land. In non-wuxia settings, the jiang hu might not even have a name for itself and may not even be acknowledged by the characters of the story but, like chi, that doesn't mean that it's not there.

When a hero trains in the martial arts, he joins an informal brotherhood of warriors that may not see eye to eye, and may even want to kill each other sometimes, but they still stick together for long enough to develop their own customs and behaviors that non-martial artists simply wouldn't understand.

A loose martial arts world represents simply the common courtesies and acknowledgement that martial artists extend to each other, an unspoken feeling of camaraderie that people who do roughly the same thing have for others in the same line of work. There can be centers of training, lone masters, and all the other staples of the genre, but they don't really care about

IT'S OVER NINE THOUSAAAAND!!!

One of the staples of inner strength in martial arts is that martial artists can sense it and measure their opponent's ability before actual battle begins. This is an abstract sense most of the time, with a practitioner simply sensing how weak or strong another hero is in relation to her own skill (the Assessment feat). The more powerful a martial artist is, the greater amounts of chi she can store, command, or shape into martial arts moves. In some settings, a martial artist's power can be measured, sometimes in vague terms, other times in exact units. Sensing a high amount of inner power will elicit responses from NPCs like, "Your Kung Fu is strong," or "His power is... over nine thousaaaaand!!!"

See the **Chi Level** section in this chapter for how to portray this quirk of inner strength in a regular manga setting that integrates martial arts.

each other, and their trainees simply go about saving the world without speaking much about their art.

A tight and inclusive martial arts world can even have a written code of conduct, like the samurai's bushido, well-defined laws, and people who enforce those laws. Under such a regime, martial arts traditions are full-fledged organizations that ally and war with each other for various reasons ranging from differing views on the true secret of martial arts to moral opposition to destroying or saving the world. But even in the fight of good versus evil, martial artists bound by the codes of their world will give certain courtesies to even their most hated enemies.

Between both extremes, a setting can include rules and elements of a martial arts world, such as laws that prohibit a master and student from being romantically involved with each other (as in *The Legendary Couple* segment of the *Condor Hero* wuxia saga, portrayed in the *The Legend of the Condor Hero* anime series), the custom of taking a dojo's sign when defeating its champion (portrayed in many works like *Ranma ½* and *Carried by the Wind*), or engaging in random dueling to prove who's stronger (as in *Tenjou Tenge*).

When the martial arts world operates in the shadow of normal society, martial artists have everyday lives, using their fighting skills out of people's sight in underground tournaments or secret battles against evil. Normal people are completely unaware that the martial artists, recognized or not, have a society all their own.

A more public martial arts world allows for its members to be a well-known and recognized caste or profession, and they can become public idols, as their duels and battles take place in the public view, regardless of their purpose.

REPUTATION AND HONOR

Whether there is a formal or informal, secret or public martial arts world in the setting, there is one thing that all martial artists have in relation to each other: fame. A martial artist's reputation includes not only his combat skills, the style he practices, and the master who trained him, but also his morals, his attitude, and his relationships with other martial artists. An evil bastard who uses the No-Shadow Kick to maul puppies can be more famous amongst martial artists than the quiet master of the Thousand Golden Buddhas style who can beat the crap out of anyone in the world but never felt the inclination to hurt a single soul.

A martial artist's reputation can spread like wildfire among his peers when he performs great deeds of heroism or villainy alike, displaying his technique and skills at it.

If the exploits of martial artists are marginal to the setting's mainstream, the hero's reputation will be limited to the martial arts world, but a widespread acceptance of martial arts can catapult a hero into legend, or at the very least, the evening news.

LEARNING NEW TECHNIQUES

In terms of story, a character only needs to train under a master, read a scroll, or practice like crazy to learn a new power. In terms of rules, you still need to gather the necessary power points to add the new power to your list of traits. With the GM's permission, you can start practicing the technique's basics long before you gather the points to pay for the power's cost, using extra effort or spending hero points to gain the power temporarily to represent your learning process.

A hero can have access to a barely practiced power by purchasing it with the Uncontrolled and/or Unreliable flaws (until the cost of a rank is 1 power point or lower), to represent how she hasn't mastered the power yet, even if she understands how it's supposed to work. As the hero gains power points, she pays the difference between the modified and unmodified power costs, until she has the power in its natural form. The learning process need not stop there, as the hero invests additional points to increase the power's ranks or add extras, power feats, and alternate powers.

DOJOS, SCHOOLS, AND STYLES

Any self-respecting martial arts story has a spot saved for naming, portraying, and differentiating between several fighting styles. Beyond simple and mundane styles like kenjutsu, kung fu, and muay thai, the martial arts world of manga and anime has styles like Dragon Blade, Iron Cat Fist, and Eight Heavenly Gates.

Fantasy martial arts styles follow a particular theme as much as real martial arts have a central philosophy. This theme not only appears in the practitioner's movements, but also affects his physical appearance, personality, and superhuman traits. In manga and anime, the martial artist *becomes* the martial art he practices.

The term "school" is practically the same as "style," although it carries more prestige and status, as a school implies a famous founder and accomplished masters who have gone down in history as true heroes of the martial arts. A "style," in comparison, can mean any hodgepodge collection of related techniques that some drunken master improvised somewhere and somehow was passed down from master to student.

The archetypical way to learn martial arts is to find a crazy old man in the mountains (who may or may not be a panty-collecting pervert or a drunken lout). However, it is much easier on both body and mind to join a dojo or a monastery, or simply be born into a ninja clan or samurai family.

In manga, traditional dojos (training halls) have existed for centuries, handed from father to son (or tomboyish daughter), keeping their school's tradition alive. A dojo can be sponsored by a feudal lord or yakuza boss or be privately owned and operated by the members of a proud samurai family or the last survivor of such and a perky collection of subordinates. The normal dojos are simply historical, but the supernatural ones may be sitting on top of a demon's tomb under the guardianship of the dojo's owners.

Temples, monasteries, and hidden ninja villages are much more specific to a particular kind of setting, because they produce very particular types of martial artists. They can operate publicly or covertly, and life can be just like life in a normal town, with the exception that school bullies can shoot flames from their palms.

In a well-developed martial arts world, heirs of a school, practitioners of a style, members of a dojo, or novices in a monastery or clan know of each other, and there are very deep rivalries and alliances between them. It is this dynamic between martial arts organizations and their members that make up the foundations of a setting's world of martial arts.

SECRET TECHNIQUES

There is no martial art without secret techniques. A martial arts technique in manga is a super power by any other name. The difference is that a martial artist can *learn* the technique without having to be irradiated by cosmic rays. Each style has its own collection of secret techniques that it teaches to its advanced students, but heroes are prone to take what they have already learned and create new styles.

A martial arts hero will usually learn techniques that follow the theme of both her character concept and the style she practices, but some rogues have no particular adherence to a fixed style and instead possess a wide variety of techniques to cover many situations.

There are two traditional ways to learn new secret techniques, from a master and from a document. Masters are jealous of who receives their hard-earned techniques and may put a hero through a series of tests before teaching her even the basics. This can be a source of many episodes' worth of adventure. Documents are ancient scrolls or books written by the technique's creator, and such is the nature of fantasy martial arts that a practitioner needs only to read these documents and practice their contents to gain understanding of a new power.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

At some point during the series, the heroes will need to practice hard. They may want to hone their powers for an upcoming tournament, or perhaps they just located a new technique to defeat the evil overlord. Whatever their goal, a practice session will consume most of an episode's time, if it doesn't actually span several episodes.

Training to learn a new technique or improve one that is already known can be an adventure in itself, such as locating some mystic training grounds fabled to naturally increase the power of those who practice there. Sadistic masters will put the hero through hell before teaching them something, only to reveal that the passage through hell was actually the training and the heroes have already learned what they wanted to learn. Think of it as the Sifu of Oz.

TOURNAMENTS

Any story where the heroes hone their combat skills needs a stage where they put those skills to use, and the venerable tradition of the martial arts tournament appears in most interpretations of the genre. Most of the times it *is* going to be a traditional tournament where participants sign up and are assigned opponents until only two remain, but sometimes things are not going to be so clear cut.

In its most basic concept, a tournament is where the heroes battle opponents one after another until they reach a final battle. Looser interpretations of this concept also represent unofficial or underground tournaments, tests to measure the combat skills of heroes and a horde of NPCs alike in a controlled environment, informal but successive challenges in improvised locales, fights against underlings of increasing power until facing off against the evil overlord, and, in its better disguised version, races through a series of guardians to get past their gates (or obtain parts of something they possess) in order to save some princess or friend (or the world!). Each opponent always has his own unique abilities and powers, and it's not rare at all that some of those opponents will end up as the heroes' best friends and allies.

The prize of a tournament depends entirely on the series in which it happens. Honor, fame, and glory go well with a load of cash or a valuable antique, but other prizes can be magical relics, secrets wrested from each defeated opponent, a TV contract, or as with the last form of tournament, the life or freedom of an ally.

MY BEST ENEMY

The world of martial arts is fiercely competitive, and martial artists are possessed by a drive to become stronger than everybody else. This means that most encounters between martial artists are going to end in a fight, sooner or later, but such is the nature of the genre that these encounters are not always truly hostile. Antiheroes are a common sight in martial arts stories, acting as antagonists when they are first introduced into the story, only to see the error of their ways or the cause of a misunderstanding and join the heroes' cause from then on. This is a perfect way to introduce new players into the story if they join your gaming group late.

These antiheroes can join the group as new friends and traveling companions, or they may remain lone wolves who appear in the nick of time to save the heroes from an insurmountable challenge, never wasting the chance to berate the heroes' weakness.

The reverse of this is also true. Best friends, and even loved ones, can turn their coats and become some of the heroes' most dangerous enemies. This is generally caused by a dire misunderstanding, but sometimes it's engineered by the manipulations of an evil villain or supernatural influence. In some tragic cases, though, the new hatred is genuine and will only end in the death of one or both parties. As a playwright once wrote, "Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned."

MARTIAL ARTS IN PLAY

The fantasy martial arts of manga and anime are easy to portray with the normal rules in *Mutants & Masterminds* combined with those found in this book. This section will give advice on how to use the rules to better stage and play a series where martial arts play an important part of the story.

THE SCOPE OF MARTIAL ARTS

How martial arts will work in your series depends entirely on what kind of story you are playing and how big a place martial arts have in it, represented by the series' focus on martial arts, the story's mood, and the setting's power level.

FOCUS

A series is like a pie that mixes many different elements to tell its story, as explained in **Chapter 1: Worlds of Manga**. The focus of the series is how big a slice of that pie belongs to martial arts, and thus, how much it deserves to be detailed.

For example, a series about the interdimensional adventures of a group of high school students where one of them is a member of the kendo club does not need to detail martial arts and their traditions, since the scope is limited to a single character and the martial arts are mundane. For such a series, simply advising the player about what feats and powers represent kendo is enough.

If, however, all the aforementioned students are members of the kendo club, and the world they are exiled to requires them to become masters of the sword and learn mystical techniques in order to defeat an order of evil shadow-wielding ninja before returning home, the story's focus on martial arts is that much greater and may merit some attention. Different powers are available as martial arts, and there may be different Knowledge specialties devoted to them.

MOOD

The story's mood shapes mostly the visuals of martial arts, but it also plays a part in adjudicating their effects. A light-hearted comedy about the adventures of bumbling ninja apprentices (*Ninja Cadets)* is very different from a horror action series about an elite ninja commando team battling satanic influences in an outlawed Christian sect in feudal Japan (*Ninja Resurrection*). The martial arts in the first example will hardly deal damage or only inflict non-lethal damage, require the Unreliable flaws, and only elicit a passing reference from the GM when they actually hit something. In the second example, the GM may pull out all the stops and require players to describe an attack in all the gory detail, as heroes and villains slice victims in half.

The rules effect of the story's mood is mostly in the way heroes earn hero points through their martial arts. As with any other series, you should discuss the mood you're aiming at with all the players at the table. You might have a great idea for a melodramatic tale of martial artists resisting a tragic destiny, whereas everyone else wants to play a fast-paced action story.

POWER LEVEL

Martial arts take a much different role when they only let you whack people with a wooden sword than when they allow you to shoot down spy satellites with an angry stare.

In a low-level setting, martial arts can be represented by feats or single-rank powers at best; martial artists are not that different from any other kind of fighter. In a high-level setting, martial artists are almost indistinguishable from super heroes, as their arts combine feats and powers of any sort.

THE CHI DESCRIPTOR

In a series where martial arts are prominent, the powers of all martial artists should have the chi descriptor by any name. This descriptor can be called anything that the series wants to use (Chakra, Cosmos, Force, Inner Strength, Ki, Breath, Power, etc.), but we'll keep using "chi" because it's short, simple, and sounds impressively Asian.

Chi as a phenomenon is a subtle form of energy that flows in certain paths across the land and in certain paths inside the form of every living, and, in smaller measure, non-living thing on the planet. It flows in conjunction with other forms of energy or on its own, creating places where miracles can be performed, again, either outside or inside.

Sensing, reading, channeling, projecting, and manipulating chi is the secret behind martial arts.

SENSING AND READING CHI

A hero who has mastered many martial arts techniques naturally increases his chi, just like a hero who has taken her single technique to its ultimate limit. Once they have opened themselves to the flows of chi, martial artists *should* be able to sense the stores of chi in the land and in others.

For the purpose of the game's rules, sensing chi is a new, exotic Sense. Depending on how you want chi to work in your series, it can be a mental sense, a spiritual sense, a magical sense, or just a plain new and standalone sense.

A person with chi sense may be able to detect, be aware of, and even pinpoint the location of chi-related phenomena. Sensing chi only means that you are aware of the presence of this subtle force and its manifestations; reading chi means that you can garner specific information from such awareness. The Chi Sense power in the **Martial Arts Techniques** section describes how to use the Super-Senses power to create the ability to sense and read chi and chi effects.

If chi is a general sense type, individual senses can include: life sense (sense life around you), death sense (sense undead around you), power sense (sense chi level and chi-based powers), health sense (sense damage and harmful conditions), and truth sense (see past illusions and deceptions). The standard rules in this book treat chi as a single sense.

CHANNELING AND STORING CHI

Many see the ability to sense and read chi as stepping stones towards other kinds of uses, but this is not necessarily the case; many martial artists can use chi intuitively, without ever being aware of it.

Every living creature channels chi with every breath, taking it in from the air and land around them and expelling some of their own, thus becoming an eddy in the river of subtle energy. Martial artists learn how to breathe "correctly," so that they take the most energy from each inhalation, which they can then channel into their astounding physical feats.

Most of the powers that a martial artist learns as techniques that channel and store chi will have a Personal range and achieve some physical effect. Martial artists who practice internal, more philosophical arts will learn channeling and storing techniques more than any other, seeking to perfect their own selves.

Powers that could work by channeling chi include Absorption, Adaptation, Animal Mimicry, Astral Form, Boost (Trait), Burrowing, Concealment, Deflect, Density, Elongation, Enhanced Ability, Flight, Force Field, Friction Control, Growth, Healing, Immovable, Immunity, Insubstantial, Invisibility, Leaping,



Mimic (Trait), Mind Reading, Morph, Nemesis, Object Mimicry, Protection, Quickness, Regeneration, Sensory Shield, Shapeshift, Shield, Shrinking, Speed, Spinning, Super-Movement, Super-Speed, Super-Strength, Swimming, and Telepathy. The GM may restrict the availability of some powers as martial arts techniques.

PROJECTING AND MANIPULATING CHI

The last type of martial arts techniques are the most flashy and violent. Like channeling and storing techniques, a hero doesn't need to sense chi in order to gather it between her palms and shoot it out. These techniques are external and work as an exertion of the martial artist's will upon the flows of chi around her or the manifestation of her own chi in a tangible form. Many of these chi techniques can be confused with magic, and indeed, some martial artists who specialize in the subtler ways to twist and shape chi receive the title of sorcerers.

Since chi is the basis of almost everything, knowing how to bend its different manifestations results in very different effects, from the brute manifestation of a powerful chi blast to the subtle rearrangement of a victim's memories, from the simple effect of stunning a foe by suddenly overloading her chi flow to the very complex weaving of a new chi flow in order to attract matter to it and create an object out of thin air.

These techniques leave behind a signature of their use, which those who are sensitive to the flows of chi can pick up, and if their chi sense is acute enough, they can even recognize the martial artist who used them.

These techniques include (Alternate) Form, Anatomic Separation, Animate Objects, Blast, Communication, Confuse, Corrosion, Create Object, Datalink, Dazzle, Disintegration, Drain (Trait), Duplication, ESP, Fatigue, Illusion, Magic, Mental Blast, Mind Switch, Nauseate, Nullify (Power), Obscure, Paralyze, Possession, Snare, Strike, Stun, Suffocate, Telekinesis, Teleport, Transfer, Transform, Trip, and all the powers with a name like (Something) Control. The GM may restrict the availability of some powers as martial arts techniques.

CHI LEVEL

A hero's chi level is determined by her physical and spiritual fortitude, as well as the techniques she has mastered. Chi level is measured in ranks as every other trait is, but you don't need to spend power points to purchase them; a hero's chi level increases naturally.

To determine a character's chi level, add the total power points spent on her ability scores to the total power points spent on feats and powers with the chi descriptor. Divide this total by five to determine the number of chi ranks:

Chi ranks = (total power points spent on ability scores + total power points spent on powers) / 5

Note that attack, defense, and Toughness save bonuses have nothing to do with a character's chi, as chi is not a measure of her combat prowess, but rather measures her inner strength and growth. Whether she chooses to orient that growth towards combat or other pursuits is entirely up to her.

Chi level is an optional, catchall trait that you can use for cool moments in a martial arts series. Some possible uses are determining the maximum limit of some powers, a substitute for other traits in particular circumstances, a new saving throw for effects that target chi specifically, or a simple benchmark of the character's martial arts strength (see the **It's Over Nine Thousaaaand!!!** sidebar). The **Martial Arts: Feats and Powers** section lists many optional feats that expand the functionality of a character's chi level.

THE STAREDOWN

One of the most characteristic events in a martial arts story is when two martial artists face each other and... just... stare... Since portraying this on the printed page or screen is a case of major boredom (even if it saves tons of production time and money), there are a number of things happening in each opponent's inner world.

The most traditional thing is that both would-be combatants are measuring each other, trying to read their stances and the terrain to gain the best advantage possible. This is a combination of the Assessment and Break the Style feats, the simple Sense Motive skill, and the Chi Sense power. Optionally, they might throw insults and pointed comments at each other.

Another less common, but still traditional, staring activity is that the opponents are *already* fighting each other, with their wills. You can make opposed chi level checks (or Will saves, if you are not using the chi level option) to determine the winner of this preliminary spiritual contest, or you can play out an entire imaginary fight between the two. What each opponent does after either wins this contest depends entirely on disposition and common sense.

Finally, a not very traditional but still common thing to do is to have flashbacks and inner dialogues. This can be played as a narration for each opponent or be a more elaborate part of the gaming session (see the **Genre Systems** sections in **Chapter 6: Gamemastering Manga** for more advice on running flashback sequences).

The victor of a staredown has an advantage over her opponent; after all, they both know who the better warrior is. After a staredown, the character who won gains a hero point plus one for every 5 points by which she beat her opponent. The hero can only spend these points if a battle with her opponent starts and, even if it does, any remaining points gained in a staredown will vanish as well.

VIDEOGAMES AND MARTIAL ARTS

Anime, manga, and videogames are on a feedback loop, with respect to martial arts. With the popularity and long history of the *Street Fighter* franchise, fighting videogames took on an anime look in their character design. With that first bridge built, anime began to integrate into its visuals the kinds of special effects that the videogames used for special attacks, which inspire manga authors to think of new ways to portray martial arts techniques on the printed page. In this circle of cross-inspiration, manga, anime, and videogames have become linked in how they portray martial arts. Things only get more complicated when there are videogames about anime and anime about videogames.

This crosspollination allows you to describe your character's special attacks as looking like certain videogame effects, with a very high chance that others around the table will recognize them. Also, you can use videogame moves as guidelines to customize your powers, going beyond a simple Blast or Strike.

MARTIAL ARTS ARSENAL

Weapons can be merely a tool for a martial artist or the whole focus of her training. While traditionally martial artists rely only on their body, the art of making a weapon behave as part of one's body is also widely accepted, as weapons open up possibilities that the body simply lacks, like reach, range, edge, damage types, or special abilities like autofire and trip.

The traits of a weapon follow their equivalents already presented in *Mutants & Mastermind*. The following traditional martial arts weapons include between parentheses the base weapon whose traits they are based on, as well as any alternative names for the same weapon. The modifiers at the end of the description alter the base weapon's traits.

Unless a martial arts weapon is magic (therefore making it a Device), all martial arts weapons are purchased with equipment points, via the Equipment feat, or with a normal Wealth check (if you're using those rules).

MARTIAL ARTS WEAPONS

NAME	BASE TYPE	DAMAGE*	SPECIAL	COST*
		SWORDS AND KNIVES		
Bi	knife	+1	-	+0
Bi Show or Punching Dagger	knife	+0	+4 to resist disarm attempts	+1
Chang Dao	sword	+1	Large	+1
Dao	sword	+0	-	+0
Hu Tou Gou (Tiger's Head Hooks)	sword	-1	+2 to disarm and trip, links with another hu tou gou	+1
Jia Jian (Butterfly Sword)	knife	+1	Slashing damage, extra damage interval for the (Attack) Flurry and Twin Weapon Strike feats reduced by 1	+3
Jian	sword	+0	+2 to feint	+1
Jitte	knife	+0	Bludgeoning damage, +2 to disarm	+1
Katana	sword	+0	Extra damage interval for the (Strike) Flurry feat reduced by 1	+1
Kunai	knife	+0	Autofire attack without Strength	+1
Nan Dao	sword	-1	Small	-1
Ninja-to	sword	-1	Multipurpose tool, Small	+1
Nodachi	sword	+1	Large	+1
Pudao or Scimitar	sword	+0	Critical 18-20	+1
Sai	knife	+0	+4 to disarm	+1
Shuangshou Jian	sword	+1	Large	+1
Tanto	knife	+0	+4 to conceal the weapon	+1
Wakizashi	sword	-1	-	-1.
Zanbatou	sword	+3	Slashing or bludgeoning, Large, penalty to weak wielders	+3
		STAVES AND CLUBS		
Bang	club	+0	-	+0
Bo	quarterstaff	+0	Double weapon	+0
Chui	warhammer	+0	-	+0
Jo	club	+0	Extra damage interval for the (Attack) Flurry and Twin Weapon Strike feats reduced by 1	+2
Suan Tou Fung	mace	+0	-	+0
Takujo	quarterstaff	+0	Double weapon, Linked to any holy power	+2
Tetsubo	club	+2	Large	+2
Tessen	club	+0	+1 dodge bonus, +4 to blocks, Large	+1
San Jie Gun (Three-Section Staff)	nunchacku	+0	+2 to feints, -4 to target's block roll, double weapon	+4
		HAFTED WEAPONS		
Ban Fu	battleaxe	+1	Large	+1
Fu Zi	battleaxe	+0	-	+0
Guan Dao	spear	+1	Slashing damage, cannot be thrown, reach 10-ft	+0
Kama or Lian	battleaxe	-1	Critical 19-20, Slashing and piercing, Small	+0
Lajatang	spear	+0	Double weapon	+1
Naginata	spear	+1	Slashing damage, cannot be thrown, reach 10-ft	+0
Qiang	spear	+0	+2 to feint	+1
Sasumata	spear	-1	Critical 20, make grapple checks as a free action after hitting, +2 to grapple	-1
Yari	spear	+0	Cannot be thrown, reach 10-ft	-1

***Weapon Damage and Cost are in addition to those of the base weapon type.

SWORDS AND KNIVES

The basic bladed weapons have a steel blade of different lengths and a handle for one or two hands. They can deal piercing, slashing, or both kinds of damage, although the legendary zanbatou deals bludgeoning damage by its sheer size alone.

Base Traits (knife): Damage +1, Critical 19-20, Piercing damage, 10 ft. range increment, Tiny, Cost 4 equipment points.

Base Traits (sword): Damage +3, Critical 19-20, Slashing damage, no range increment, Medium, Cost 5 equipment points.

Bi (knife): This Chinese weapon has a short blade with both edges curved to a central point and a carved handle.

Bi show or punching dagger (knife): This weapon is held in front of the fist, thanks to its handle, which is perpendicular to the broad blade. The blade tapers to a fine point, with two wooden prongs extending backwards as a counterweight. *Modifiers:* +4 to resist disarm attempts, Cost +1.

Chang dao (sword): A great sword with a broad blade that curves slightly at the far end, it usually has metal rings hanging from the inside, non-edged side. *Modifiers:* Damage +1, Large, Cost +1.

Dao (sword): This Chinese sword has a long, single-edged, and slightly curved blade. A variant known as the shuang dao is merely two matching dao swords used one in each hand.

Hu tou gou (tiger's head hooks, sword): This long, thin blade ends in a hooked prong, and a forward-facing curved blade covers the hand. These exotic additions help in grabbing an opponent's weapons and limbs alike. Two of them may be linked together by the hooks to "create" a 10-feet ranged slashing weapon by swinging them around. *Modifiers:* Damage –1, +2 to disarm and trip, links with another hu tou gou, Cost +1.

Jia jian (butterfly sword, knife): Normally used in pairs, this weapon has a very broad and straight blade, with a single edge that curves inward at the point, plus a strut covering the hand from the guard. *Modifiers:* Damage +1, Slashing damage, extra damage interval for the (Attack) Flurry and Twin Weapon Strike feats reduced by 1, Cost +3.

Jian (sword): This Chinese sword with a long, straight, and double-edged blade is still thin enough to make it surprisingly light. A strip of leather or cloth dangles from the pommel, ending with a colorful tassel that an accomplished martial artist can use to confuse opponents. *Modifiers:* +2 to feint, Cost +1.

Jitte (knife): Essentially the same as a sai, it only has one prong, instead of two. *Modifiers:* Bludgeoning damage, +2 to disarm, Cost +1.

Katana (sword): One of the most elegant and deadly blades ever forged, the katana is the signature weapon of samurai, although a few non-samurai warriors may own one, acquired as spoils of war, forged illegally, or taken from a fallen samurai (see **The Daisho**). The katana is a long, curved blade meant to be used with both hands, although some fighting styles teach its one-handed use. *Modifiers:* Extra damage interval for the (Strike) Flurry feat reduced by one, Cost +1.

Kunai (knife): This simple knife is almost exclusively used by ninja. The handle is thin and ends with a circular ring, which allows for various ingenious applications, such as using it as a tent stake, rope weight, or for easy storage and concealment, as well as a balance and finger-hold for throwing. *Modifiers*: Can be used as an Autofire attack without adding Strength, Cost +1.

DOUBLE WEAPONS

Some particularly large weapons have "free" space that weaponsmiths promptly use to add more pointy bits and possibly offer different attack and damage options to the wielder. Double weapons are those that can deal damage with the end opposite to their primary harming component, and they are wielded with two hands, such as the simple staff or the intimidating lajatang. By having two weapons in one, a hero can switch to using the other end as a free action, without the need to sheathe or drop her primary weapon to draw a second one, which would require a move action or the Quick Draw feat. Heroes can try to fight with the other end of the weapon without switching, as if the secondary end was a normal light weapon held in their off-hand (and thus suffering the normal –4 penalty). The Ambidexterity feat makes it easier to fight with double weapons, and the Twin Weapon Strike feat in this chapter makes it deadlier. Double weapon is a feature that costs one equipment point and replaces the cost of the secondary weapon, provided this does not cost more than the primary weapon. If both ends of the weapon are basically the same, there is no cost, since it makes no difference whether their wielder attacks with either end, regardless of which hand performed the attack.

THE DAISHO

A samurai's daisho is the combination of his katana and wakizashi, and both are crafted at the same time. Most samurai keep the wakizashi as a backup, concentrating on their katana techniques, although many practice at using both, one in each hand. The weapons in a daisho are a far cry from common katana and wakizashi. A successful Knowledge (civics, martial arts, or nobility and royalty) check at DC 20 can identify one of the following facts about a daisho at first glance: the identity of its owner, the identity of its maker, or the family, clan, or lord whom the daisho's owner serves. The only way to acquire a daisho is to have the Benefit feat marking the hero as a member of the samurai caste, or at least a worthy descendant and heir of the weapons.

The weapons in a daisho are perfectly balanced, granting their wielder a +1 bonus to attack when wielding each weapon when used as a pair. The total cost of the daisho is 11 equipment points.

Nan dao (sword): A short, single-edged, and slightly curved blade, this weapon can have rings on the inner edge or a tassel on the pommel, but the weapon is too small for these to be of any use. *Modifiers:* Damage –1, Small, Cost –1.

Ninja-to (sword): A short, utilitarian, straight blade with a long, hollow handle, the ninja-to is traditionally used by ninja. The handle compartment can be used to hide all sorts of things, such as caltrops, poison sacks, metal balls, a kunai, or a short tamagusari. The sturdy handguard is often used as an aid to climbing sheer surfaces. The ninja-to's scabbard is actually part of the weapon, open on one end to be used for various ends, including a breathing tube, and it is sturdy enough that it can be used as a club. *Modifiers:* Damage –1, serves as a tool for various uses under GM authorization, Small, Cost +1.

Nodachi (sword): Shaped as a katana, with a nodachi has a much longer and heavier blade and a correspondingly longer handle. *Modifiers:* Damage +1, Large, Cost +1.

Pudao or scimitar (sword): A long and light curved blade used primarily from a mounted position, the pudao is also devastating in the hands of an expert on foot. *Modifiers:* Critical 18-20, Cost +1.

RANGED AND REACHING WEAPONS

NAME	BASE TYPE	DAMAGE*	SPECIAL	COST*
Biao	dart	+1	-	+1
Bo Biao	shuriken	+1	-	+1
Chui Jian Tong (Fukidake or greater blowgun)	dart	+0 (don't add Strength)	30 ft. range increment, Large (Tiny poisoned darts, +3 poison damage, Toughness save, Poison extra; +9 cost)	+0
Fukimi-bari	shuriken	+0	+2 to feint, +4 to keep them hidden, Diminutive	+2
Kusarigama	chain, axe	+0	+1 cost per additional 5-ft reach, 30 ft. max.	8 total
Mu	javelin	+0	-	+0
Sheng Bao (Meteor Hammer)	chain	+1	Double weapon, +4 to keep it hidden, 20-ft reach	+5
Tamagusari (Lian Bian)	chain	+0	Double weapon, add +1 cost for every extra 5 ft. of reach, up to 30 ft.	+1

OTHER WEAPONS

NAME	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	DAMAGE DESCRIPTOR	RANGE INCREMENT	SPECIAL	COST
Blowgun	+2	20	Poison	10 ft.	Fortitude save (poison effect), Poison extra, cannot penetrate Impervious Toughness, Small (needles are Diminutive)	5
Tiger Claws (Nekode)	+1	20	Piercing damage	-	May re-roll Climb checks, cannot be disarmed, Tiny	4
War Fan (Gunsen, Wu-shan)	+2	20	Slashing (open), piercing (closed)	10 ft.	+2 to feint or +1 dodge, +4 to hide	7
Wheel Blades	+2	19-20	Slashing	-	+2 to disarm, Linked to Touch powers	6

Sai (knife): A sharp, straight pick used for stabbing, a sai has two curving prongs that act both as a hand guard as well as a tool for trapping an enemy's weapon and disarming her. *Modifiers:* +4 to disarm, Cost +1.

Shuangshou jian (sword): Shaped exactly like a jian, but larger and heavier, the shuangshou does not have the distracting ability of its little sister. *Modifiers:* Damage +1, Large, Cost +1.

Tanto (knife): A small knife without a guard, the tanto's handle merges seamlessly with its scabbard. It is not rare for women to have a tanto hidden somewhere in their clothing. *Modifiers*: +4 to conceal the weapon, Cost +1.

Wakizashi (sword): A short sword with a slightly curved edge, the wakizashi is the katana's companion. *Modifiers:* Damage –1, Cost –1.

Zanbatou (sword): The zanbatou is an impossibly large slab of metal the size of a man and about a palm and a half wide, with a sturdy and long handle. A hero *must* have a Strength score of 20 or higher or suffer a –4 penalty on attack rolls for not being strong enough to wield this massive blade (the Super-Strength bonus to carrying capacity counts). *Modifiers:* Damage +3, Slashing or bludgeoning damage (choose with each attack), Large, penalty to weak wielders, Cost +3.

STAVES AND CLUBS

Blunt weapons are slightly easier to master, although their simplicity opens ways to use them very effectively for a variety of purposes.

Base Traits (club or mace): Damage +2, Critical 20, Bludgeoning damage, 10 ft. range increment, Medium, Cost 4 equipment points.

Base Traits (nunchaku): Damage +2, Critical 20, Bludgeoning damage, no range, Small, Cost 3 equipment points.

Base Traits (quarterstaff): Damage +2, Critical 20, Bludgeoning damage, 10 ft. reach, Large, Cost 4 equipment points.

Base Traits (warhammer): Damage +3, Critical 20, Bludgeoning damage, 10 ft. range increment, Medium, Cost 5 equipment points.

Bang (club): This is the Chinese name for a club.

Bo (quarterstaff): A simple Japanese staff, slightly taller than a man's body, a bo is usually polished, but most often it is carried as a simple walking staff, also called a gun in Chinese. This is a double weapon, and both ends have the same traits.

Chui (warhammer): This is a thick wooden handle topped by a heavy, metallic sphere.

Jo (club): A long stick that works essentially as a club, these are used in pairs. *Modifiers:* Extra damage interval for the (Attack) Flurry and Twin Weapon Strike feats reduced by one, Cost +2.

San jie gun (three-section staff, nunchacku): Although named as a staff, this weapon works like nunchaku, linking three long sticks together with string or chain. A three-section staff is a complex weapon that is hard to predict. *Modifiers:* +2 to feints, –4 to target's block roll, double weapon, Cost +4.

Suan tou fung (mace): This is the Chinese name for a mace.

Takujo (quarterstaff): A staff with one end topped by a metal ring, other rings hang on either side. The takujo chimes softly as the rings strike each other. The takujo is a double weapon. In addition to doing damage, the ring end can channel touch attacks for priestly powers. *Modifier:* Double weapon, an attack with the takujo is considered Linked to any power with the holy descriptor, Cost +2.

Tetsubo (club): A great club studded and ringed with steel, the tetsubo is a simple, yet devastating, weapon. The Chinese version is called a changbang. *Modifiers:* Damage +2, Large, Cost +2.

Tessen (club): The tessen is a thick, wide instrument with a handle that resembles a fan, but it can be used to protect as well as attack. The tessen cannot be used as a weapon in the same round that it provides its defensive options. *Modifiers:* Defense +1 dodge bonus, +4 to blocks, Large, Cost +1.

HAFTED WEAPONS

These weapons consist of hafts of different lengths, with blades of different forms at the top. Examples of short weapons include axes, and examples of long weapons include spears.

Base Traits (battleaxe): Damage +3, Critical 20, Slashing damage, no range, Medium, Cost 4 equipment points.

Base Traits (spear): Damage +3, Critical 19-20, Piercing damage, 20 ft. range increment, Large, Cost 7 equipment points.

Ban fu: This is a Chinese greataxe. *Modifiers:* Damage +1, Large, Cost +1.

Fu zi (battleaxe): This is a Chinese axe.

Guan dao (spear): A Chinese equivalent to the naginata, the guan dao has a shorter haft and a broader blade, sometimes sporting gaudy ornaments. *Modifiers:* Damage +1, Slashing damage, cannot be thrown but has a 10-feet range, Cost +0.

Kama (Lian, battleaxe): This odd weapon evolved from a harvesting tool and consists of a short haft topped by a horizontal, half-crescent blade with its cutting edge facing downwards. *Modifiers:* Damage –1, Critical 19-20, Slashing and piercing damage, Small, Cost +0.

Lajatang (spear): This weapon consists of a long haft with a crescent-shaped blade on both ends. *Modifiers:* Double weapon, Cost +1.

Naginata (spear): Traditionally a weapon for female warriors and samurai wives, the naginata also sees use in infantry ranks. It is a long, wooden shaft with a long and slightly curved blade on one end. *Modifiers:* Damage +1, Slashing damage, cannot be thrown but has a 10-feet range, Cost +0.

Qiang (spear): A Chinese spear with a flexible haft, the qiang has a tassel hanging just below the head. *Modifiers:* +2 to feint, Cost +1.

Sasumata (spear): This weapon is designed to capture opponents with a minimum of harm, consisting of a sturdy wooden shaft topped by a crescent-shaped blade. *Modifiers:* Damage –1, Critical 20, make grapple checks as a free action after hitting, +2 to grapple, Cost –1.

Yari (spear): A long and sturdy spear, it can be used effectively in a charge or to resist a charge. *Modifiers:* cannot be thrown but has a 10-feet range, Cost –1.

RANGED AND REACHING WEAPONS

Attacking from range does not normally require the exhaustive training of melee combat forms, but some exotic ranged weapons do require skill and practice to make use of their unusual characteristics.

Base Traits (dart): Damage +1, Critical 19-20, Piercing damage, 20 ft. range increment, Tiny, Cost 5 equipment points.

Base Traits (chain): Damage +2, Critical 20, Bludgeoning damage, +2 to trip and disarm attempts. 10 ft. reach, Large, Cost 7 equipment points.

Base Traits (javelin): Damage +2, Critical 20, Piercing damage, 30 ft. range, Medium, Cost 6 equipment points.

Base Traits (shuriken): Damage +1 (don't add Strength), Critical 20, Piercing damage, Autofire, 10 ft. range, Tiny, Cost 3 equipment points.

Base Traits (whip): Damage +0, Critical 20, Bludgeoning damage, +2 to trip and disarm attempts, 15 ft. range, Large, Cost 5 equipment points.

Biao (dart): These heavy iron darts can be wielded like knives. *Modifiers*: Damage +1, Cost +1.

Bo biao (shuriken): These Chinese throwing stars are a little larger and heavier than their Japanese cousins. *Modifier:* Damage +1, Cost +1.

Chui jian tong (fukidake or greater blowgun, dart): A blowgun that is almost as long as a person is tall, it fires darts that deal actual damage in addition to any poison. *Modifiers:* Damage +0 (don't add Strength), 30 ft. range increment, Large (darts are Tiny), Cost +0. Poisoned darts add a +3 poison damage (Toughness save, Poison extra) effect for a +9 cost.

Fukimi-bari (shuriken): These diminutive darts can be concealed in the mouth and spat out at an opponent, usually at the face. *Modifiers:* +2 to feint, +4 to keep them hidden, Diminutive, Cost +2.

Kusarigama (chain and battleaxe): This weapon is basically a kama with a tamagusari joined at the ends as a double weapon. Use the stats for the kama and the tamagusari, but add the fact that a martial artist can swing the bladed end from the chain, effectively giving the kama a 10-feet range. *Modifiers:* 8 equipment points total, +1 per additional 5-ft reach up to 30 ft. total.

Mu (javelin): This is a Chinese javelin.

Sheng bao (meteor hammer, chain): This weapon is a length of rope or chain with two heavy ends that range from simple steel balls to decorated demonic heads. Possessing utmost flexibility, it can be used as a double or simple weapon by controlling the rope's length, its ends thrown as ranged weapons and immediately pulled back, concealed by wrapping it around the waist, etc. *Modifiers:* Damage +1, double weapon, +4 to keep it hidden, 20-ft reach, Cost +5.

Tamagusari (lian bian, chain): Also called manrikigusari, konpi, or simply kusari depending on its length and the shape of its bearings, this weapon is a length of chain with one or two weighted ends. It can be used as a ranged weapon by throwing one of the ends towards the enemy or as a double weapon (but not as both in the same round). *Modifiers:* Double weapon, Cost +1 (add +1 cost for every extra 5 ft. of reach, up to 30 ft.)

OTHER

The following weapons defy descriptions, having their own characteristics that cannot easily be grouped with similar weapons. Their full traits are given in their descriptions.

Blowgun: A long tube through which the character can fire needles that cause little damage in and of themselves, so they are commonly coated with poison. Damage +2, Fortitude save (poison effect), Poison extra, 10 ft. range increment, cannot penetrate Impervious Toughness, Small (needles are Diminutive), Cost 5 equipment points.

Tiger claws (Nekode): This simple ninja weapon consists of a strap or glove worn on the hand, with three or four curved prongs coming out from the palm. The wielder cannot be disarmed, and they aid in climbing. *Traits*: Damage bonus +1, Critical 20, Piercing damage, may re-roll Climb checks on sheer surfaces, cannot be disarmed, no range, Tiny, Cost 4 equipment points.

War fan (gunsen, wu-shan): A weapon favored by kunoichi as well as noble ladies, and not a few male courtiers, the war fan's frame is made with sharp metal spikes, and the material in between can be as simple as canvas or as rich as gold-embroidered silk. The war fan can be used to confuse the opponent as a normal feint attempt or as an unfocused series of twists that grant a +1 bonus to Defense. The war fan cannot be used to attack in the same round that it is used to confuse. *Traits:* Damage bonus +2, Critical 20, Slashing (when open) or Piercing (when closed) damage, +2 to feint or +1 dodge bonus to Defense, +4 to keep it hidden, 10-ft. range increment, Cost 7 equipment points.

Wheel blades (full moon, wind-fire wheel, etc.): This family of exotic weapons comes from China and consists, in its most basic form, of a metal wheel with sharpened edges and a handle at some point on its circumference. Variations make the blade a crescent instead of a circle, add a second crescent-shaped blade, or are made of two crescents crossing each other. A wheel blade is an extension of unarmed skill, but it adds the ability to catch enemy weapons or perform other tricks. Attacking with a wheel blade uses any and all bonuses related to attacking unarmed, but it uses its damage bonus as with any normal weapon. Also, a wheel blade can channel any Touch-range attack the wielder has, as if they *were* the character's hands. *Traits:* Damage +2, Critical 19-20, Slashing damage, +2 to disarm, an attack with the wheel blade is considered Linked to Touch-range powers, no range, Cost 6 equipment points.

REPUTATION AND HONOR

A martial artist's recognition in the world of martial arts or society at large can play a large role in a story where martial arts are prominent. *Mutants & Masterminds* already includes honor as a Complication, and the *Mastermind's Manual* offers an optional Reputation trait, but these can be expanded to work with the special codes and ways of the martial arts world.

THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR

The prime example of a code of honor is bushido, the samurai's code. In its most simple form, bushido espouses the virtues of rectitude, courage, benevolence, respect, honesty, honor, glory, and loyalty. Each tenet can be freely interpreted and expanded upon to require certain behaviors from martial artists. Also, each tenet can be taken as a single Complication or as a quirk of a martial artist hero, meaning that she's philosophically bound to the tenet's virtues and will have all sort of setbacks derived from it.

While honor is more of a role-playing, qualitative trait, it can be defined as a set score in settings where honor and virtue are real forces and pillars of the world. All heroes start with an arbitrary Honor bonus equal to 0, and the Benefit feat increases this by 4. Different settings can grant protagonists a greater starting bonus.

You can use Honor in the following situations, with permission from the GM:

- When using an interaction skill, you can choose to use your Honor bonus instead a skill bonus, as your inherent virtue shines forth to impress others. The GM decides if it's appropriate to the situation.
- When you try to resist mental powers that would force you to act against your honor, you can use your Honor bonus instead of a Will save or gain an Honor check if the initial Will save fails.
- When about to do something dishonorable, you can make an Honor check with a varying DC to realize the consequences of your actions.
- When a noble or other important person is deciding who in the group to consider the leader, she will always address the hero with the highest Honor bonus.
- If the game includes a system to measure corruption or a hero's descent into moral darkness, Honor can be the saving throw to resist the spiritual taint.
- When you become Staggered, Unconscious, or Dying, you can make an Honor check with the same DC as the last failed Toughness save, in order to act unhindered for one full round, after which you drop with your condition worsened by one step (Unconscious, Dying, and Dead, respectively).
- As above, but the check can stave off the effect of fatigue and exhaustion for one round.
- Use Honor instead of Chi Level in a staredown contest (see **The Staredown** earlier in this chapter).
- If you belong to an organization that values honor, your rank in the organization may be influenced by your Honor bonus. Also, an Honor check can take the place of a Wealth check.

LOSING AND GAINING HONOR

Honor is a floating trait that can go up and down without needing to spend power points. The GM is the final arbiter of which actions would garner a loss or increase of Honor, taking into account a hero's code and how grave her transgression or adherence to it was.

Common transgressions in the martial arts genre include, but are certainly not limited to, giving the final blow to an enemy that fought well and surrendered honorably, abandoning friends or duty for personal reasons, disobeying a direct order from a master that results in tragedy (the ultimate "I told you so"), partaking in excess (gluttony, drunkenness, etc.), being defeated by an inferior enemy, refusing to die on the battlefield, lying, or slaughtering non-combatants.

Common acts that would increase Honor include saving the life of someone at the risk of one's own, keeping one's word despite any negative consequences, obeying one's master against better judgment, defeating a superior enemy, resisting temptation, or incurring a great sacrifice for a greater cause.

MAKING A NAME

A hero's name spreads in the martial arts world for better or ill, until he finds his home beset by challengers who wish to gain fame by vanquishing someone of his caliber. A martial artist hero cannot help but become famous eventually, gaining a reputation depending on what acts he committed to achieve his fame.

A very simple way to handle reputation is through the Gather Information and Knowledge (martial arts) skills, plus the Well-Informed and Well-Known feats (the latter found in **Chapter 2: Heroes**). Being well-known means that people who find out who you are get to make a Gather Information check against a DC that depends on just how famous you really are.

FAME & REPUTATION

DC	FAME
25	You've made a few achievements, like winning a local tournament.
20	Your actions have had some impact, like saving a lost village or having your name mentioned in an obscure chatroom.
15	You are amongst the most famous martial artists in the world.
10	Your name is a household item; you've probably saved the world a few times, with witnesses.
5	You might as well have your own religion.

Instead of a Gather Information check, people who meet you might make a Knowledge (martial arts) check or use another appropriate Knowledge specialty. Whether your reputation is fame or infamy depends on just what you did to have your name spread around.

And speaking of names... all martial artists develop a name other than the one they were given by their parents. It is the key to their notoriety, and very often, they don't give it to themselves; rather, their actions earn it for them.

A hero's reputation is tied to his name. Very few people will blink when they hear of Shiro from Matsu Village, but when they find out he's actually Ten Storm Blade, the great swordsman, they will ask him to defeat whatever evil ails them (if he's a hero) or run for their lives (if he's a villain).

You can adopt as many names as you want, but each name will have its own reputation, and it's quite possible that someone, somewhere, will put two and two together and find out they are all the same person, especially in a TL 3+ setting where information technologies are in place and widespread.

Martial arts names are composed of any number of the following four elements: natural and mythical creatures, numerals and ordinals, natural phenomena, natural and manufactured weapons, and modifiers. The combination of these can yield names like Iron Bear, Twelve Dragons, and Fire Storm Sword. More often than not, a martial arts hero's name is the same or related to his martial arts style.

MARTIAL ARTS MOVES

Martial arts are already part of the game in one way or another. The right collection of feats and powers can easily simulate most of the moves and abilities shown in manga and anime. The feats and powers in this section are variations, adaptations, or arrangements of existing options that simulate some of the signature techniques shown in fantastic martial arts.

MARTIAL ARTS STANCES

The **(Martial Arts) Stance** power found in **Chapter 2** allows you to simulate the basic underpinnings of a martial arts style. While the power is a container that lets you choose any combination of feats and powers for the stance, it's recommended that you limit yourself to Permanent or Lasting effects to better simulate how a stance works.

All martial arts styles should have at least one stance power in their collection of traits, for a stance represents the basic teachings of a style: how to stand, move, and react in combat. The following are some examples of stances, with powers and feats chosen around a coherent concept. The stance's name is followed by the number of ranks needed in **(Martial Arts) Stance** and its total cost. Note that the ranks in a stance's list of feats and powers are expressed with a "+," as the stance may increase the number of



ranks you already have in the featured feats and powers.

- *Drunken Boxing Stance (4 ranks, 19 power points):* You stagger and swagger in a drunken haze, making you very unpredictable. *Feats:* Improved Block, Improved Defense, Instant Up, Prone Fighting. *Powers:* **Deflect +3** (all ranged and mental attacks), **Enhanced Dexterity +3**, **Shield +4.** *Power Feats:* Unreadable. *Drawbacks:* Handicapped (drunken state, slowed to half speed and –4 to checks to avoid being dropped prone, –2).
- *Eye of the Storm Stance (4 ranks, 16 power points):* You close your eyes and enter a state of perfect calm, in which your sword can react to everything around you with lightning speed. *Feats:* Elusive Target, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative +2, Takedown Attack, Quick Draw (draw), Uncanny Dodge 2 (chi, hearing). *Powers:* **Blast 3** (wind slash created by a sword swing, slashing damage), **Chi Sense 3** (innate chi sense), **Shield 3** (sword moves on its own to deflect attacks)**.** *Flaws:* Weapon-Dependent (sword).
- *Iron Body Stance (3 ranks, 14 power points):* You channel your chi into every fiber of your muscles, making your flesh and stance as solid as iron. *Feats:* Withstand Damage (balanced to –3 Defense and +3 Toughness). *Powers:* **Enhanced Constitution +3**, **Immovable +3**, **Immunity 2** (critical hits), **Protection +3** (Impervious). *Drawbacks:* Balanced Stance (Withstand Damage).
- *Lightfoot Stance (2 ranks, 10 power points):* You channel your chi towards your feet, giving you supernatural grace and balance. *Feats:* Environmental Adaptation (choose a terrain), Favored Environment (choose a terrain), Ninja Run, Unarmed Flurry. *Powers:* **Super-Movement 3** (perfect balance, slow fall, wall crawler).
- *Monkey Stance (2 ranks, 10 power points):* You can prance and twist around your opponent in a confusing manner, striking when she least

ARCHETYPES IN MARTIAL ARTS SERIES

Series that feature martial arts prominently have their own archetypes, in addition to the more common ones already described in **Chapter 2: Heroes**. The Ninja and Super Martial Artist depend on the existence of fantasy martial arts in a series, and therefore are a little out of place if martial arts do not give any special powers.

NINJA

Shadows are a ninja's home, his weapons, and his teachers. The forbidden arts of ninjutsu teach him the hand-to-hand combat to fight with the best, they hone his body so he is capable of superhuman feats, and they open his soul to supernatural techniques passed down from generations. A ninja hires himself either as a freelance assassin or as part of a clan structure, his unique mastery ensuring that he has all the tools he needs for any job.

Examples: *The entire main cast of Basilisk, the entire cast of Naruto, the villains from Ninja Scroll.*

SUPER MARTIAL ARTIST

Judo, Aikido, Kung Fu... those are only the basics. The true power of martial arts lies in the ability to harness the internal energy that unlocks unlimited potential. A super martial artist runs faster than a speeding bullet, his punches demolish buildings, and his energy blasts can shatter the Moon itself. With such power at his fingertips, a super martial artist can choose to protect the world or to enslave it.

Examples: *The main cast of* Dragonball Z, *Kenshiro from* Fist of the North Star, *the main cast of* Saint Seiya *(aka* Knights of the Zodiac*).*

expects it. *Feats:* Acrobatic Bluff, Elusive Target, Evasion, Sneak Attack +1, Startle, Stunning Attack, Ultimate Save (Reflex), Up the Wall. *Powers:* **Super-Movement 1** (swinging)

- *Tiger Stance (2 ranks, 10 power points):* When assuming the basic stance of the Fierce Tiger Claw style, you become agile and strong, graceful and deadly. *Feats:* Dodge Focus +1, Elusive Target +1, Improved Initiative +1, Power Attack. *Powers:* **Leaping +1, Strike +2** (claw-like fingers; Penetrating; Mighty).

MARTIAL ARTS FEATS

The following feats expand upon others that already appear in the pages of *Mutants & Masterminds*, offering equivalent functions suited to manga martial arts.

AGGRESSIVE COUNTER — COMBAT

You can cancel the attacks of your opponents so wildly and brutally that they are not sure what happened when you attack them back. When you successfully counter a power, the next attack against the same target counts as a surprise attack.

MARTIAL ARTS FEATS

FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
COMBAT FEATS	
Aggressive Counter	You have a surprise attack after countering a power
Bullet Time (+)	Gain extra actions when surging
Catch Attack (+)	Use a blocked or deflected attack to your advantage
Chi Counter	Use your Chi level when countering chi attacks
Evasive Retreat (+)	Move when an attack misses you
Follow-Up Attack (+)	Attack again a foe you knock back
Passing Attack	Keep moving after a charge
Twin Weapon Strike	Attack with two weapons at once
GENERAL FEATS	
Overwhelming Presence	Impose penalties on others' interaction skill checks

BULLET TIME — COMBAT, RANKED

Time slows down as you spend your energy to react faster than a speeding bullet. When you use extra effort to surge, you can spend a hero point to gain an additional standard action for every three ranks in this feat, on top of the extra action that a surge provides. You can only have one extra attack in your turn, regardless of how many extra actions you can make with this feat.

CATCH ATTACK — COMBAT, RANKED

When you successfully block or deflect an attack, you can catch it, if your block roll exceeded the attack's roll by five or more. Choose a type of attack when gaining this feat, melee weapon (includes melee Devices), unarmed (includes Strike powers), thrown and missile weapons, ballistic weapons, or energy attacks. Each additional rank allows you to use this feat with another type of attack that you block. If your opponent attacked you with a natural weapon, you can make a free grapple check. If the attack was made with a melee weapon, you can attempt to disarm it as a free action. If the attack was made with a thrown weapon, it ends up in your hand, and you may use it in your turn. If the attack was a power, you take its energy and may redirect it, increasing your next attack's damage bonus by half the power's rank or half your response power's ranks, whichever is lower. This bonus disappears at the end of your next round, whether you used it successfully or not.

CHI COUNTER — COMBAT

You can charge your techniques with additional chi, in order to disperse the energy of an opponent's attack. When countering another power with the chi descriptor, you can use your Chi Level in the opposed power check.

EVASIVE RETREAT — COMBAT, RANKED

You dance around the battlefield, eluding your enemies. When you employ a defensive stance or engage in total defense, every time an attack misses you, you can move in any direction with any movement type you are capable of (so you can sink down into the ground, if you have Burrowing, after evading an attack). The distance you can move is equal to (rank × 5) feet or your maximum movement speed, whichever is less.

FOLLOW-UP ATTACK — COMBAT, RANKED

If you inflict enough damage to a target to knock it back (see **Knockback** in *Mutants & Masterminds*, page 165), and if you can somehow move to its new position (either by an unspent move action in your turn or using extra effort

NINJA POWER LEVEL 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+1	+0	+1	+0
15	16	12	10	12	10

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+3*	+7	+12	+8

*flat-footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+15), Climb 8 (+10), Concentration 6 (+7), Disable Device 7 (+7), Disguise 8 (+8), Escape Artist 6 (+9), Knowledge (martial arts) 5 (+5), Notice 10 (+11), Search 5 (+5), Sleight of Hand 8 (+11), Stealth 12 (+15), Survival 5 (+6)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, Attack Focus (melee) 5, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 2, Equipment, Hide in Plain Sight, Ninja Run[1], Quick Draw (draw), Sneak Attack, Strike Flurry[1], Up the Wall[1]

Equipment: Ninja armor (Toughness +2), shuriken (damage +1; piercing, Autofire, 10-ft. increment)

POWERS

Chi Sense[1] **2** (basic chi sense)
Morph 2 (any)
Shadow Clone[1] **1**
Shadowy Form 4 (**Concealment 2** [sight, Limited to areas of shadow –1], **Insubstantial 1**, **Super-Movement 4** [permeate, slithering, trackless, wall crawling] **Teleport 2** (Accurate; Medium [shadows]; Change Velocity]))
Strike 6 (Mighty)
Substitution[1] **5**
Super-Movement 1 (perfect balance[1])

Combat: Attack +10 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +12, Damage +1 (shuriken), +8 (Strike), Defense +8 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback –3/-1, Initiative +3

Abilities 15 + Skills 23 (92 ranks) + Feats 18 + Powers 50 + Combat 22 + Saves 22 = 150



SUPER MARTIAL ARTIST POWER LEVEL 15

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+5/+3	+6/+4	+3	+0	+2	+0
20/16	22/18	16	10	14	10

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+14/+11*	+19	+19/+17	+10

*flat-footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 14 (+20), Concentration 12 (+14), Intimidate 6 (+6), Knowledge (martial arts) 18 (+18), Notice 8 (+10), Sense Motive 14 (+16), Survival 8 (+10)

Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, Assessment, Break the Style[1] 5, Combo Action[1] 2 (feinting, hitting on a charge action), Defensive Roll 3, Improved Grab, Last Stand[1], Move-by Action, Perfect Timing[1], Power Attack, Trance, Withstand Damage[1]

POWERS

Battle Form[1] 8 (sudden release of long-stored chi; Slow Fade, recharges through Trance; **Regeneration 12** [recovery bonus 3, recovery rate 9, automatically recover Bruised and Injured conditions once per round without rest], **Regeneration 12** [recovery rate, recovers from Staggered and Disabled as a standard action; Fades; Fast Fade[1] 3 – works only once], **Shield 9**, **Speed +1**, **Super-Strength 4**, **Teleport 5** [blinding speed burst; Short Range; Change Direction, Turnabout])

Combo Finish[1] 8 (**Disrupt Chi 10, Drain Constitution 10**, **Drain Toughness 10**)

Enhanced Dexterity 4

Enhanced Strength 2

Flight 3

Protection 8

Speed 3

Strike 10 (chi-charged; Accurate, Combo Element[1], Mighty, *Alternate Powers:* **Blast 12** [chi; Distracting; Split Attack], **Deflect 6** [all ranged], **Paralyze 6** [blocks chi flow; Fortitude save; Combo Element[1]], **Strike 6** [chi; Overwhelming Counter[1]], **Trip 12** [Knockback; Touch range; Combo Element[1]])

Combat: Attack +13, +15 (primary Strike), Grapple +22 (+18 outside of Battle Form), Damage +6 (countering strike), +15 (primary strike), +12 (primary Blast), +6 (secondary Blast), Defense +6 (+15 in Battle Form, +3 flat-footed), Knockback –6, Initiative +6

Drawbacks: Fast Fade[1] (applied to 12 ranks of Regeneration inside the Battle Form power, –3)

Abilities 24 + Skills 21 (84 ranks) + Feats 19 + Powers 89 + Combat 38 + Saves 37 – Drawbacks 3 = 225

"POWER OVERWHELMING!"



TWIN WEAPON FLURRY

Combining the Flurry (Attack) feat in **Chapter 2** and Twin Weapon Strike can quickly lead to abuse, as the extra damage effects of these feats does stack. The penalty to attack stacks, too, so you would be suffering a –4 penalty if using both feats at once. You cannot reduce the bonus interval of Twin Weapon Strike, so its extra damage would only apply when exceeding your target's Defense by 5, even if Flurry has enough ranks to reduce its interval to 2. The bonus for Twin Weapon Strike does not allow you to exceed PL limits, but Flurry does, so always count the bonus damage from the Flurry feat first; this way, if Twin Weapon Strike results in bonus damage as well, the total will not be able to exceed the setting's power level.

to gain an additional action or double your movement if your move action is not enough), the target can suffer extra damage as you take another shot at it. The target makes a Toughness save against a damage bonus equal to your ranks in this feat or up to half of the damage bonus of the attack that knocked it back, whichever is less, and you end up adjacent to it.

OVERWHELMING PRESENCE GENERAL

Your inner power bleeds out in a barely perceptible aura, filling those around you with a sense of awe at your incredible potential. Anyone within (Chi Level × 5) feet able to interact with you must make a Will save (DC 10 + Chi Level). For every two points by which the save fails, the subject suffers a –1 penalty to interaction skill checks against you. This penalty cannot exceed half your Chi Level, you may turn this ability on and off at will, and you can exclude people from suffering the penalty (although they can still feel your greatness).

PASSING ATTACK COMBAT

When using the charge action, you do not have to stop when you reach your target but instead can keep moving up to your maximum speed. You can only attack from the direction where you initiated the charge. If your attack misses, your target's next attack against you counts as a surprise attack, even if you have Uncanny Dodge.

TWIN WEAPON STRIKE COMBAT

If you are wielding a second weapon in your off-hand or a weapon with the double weapon feature, you can use both weapons (or both ends of the weapon) to attack in the same round in a relentless onslaught. You attack as a full action and suffer a –2 penalty to your attack roll. If you exceed your target's Defense by 5, you can add the secondary weapon's damage bonus to your total damage bonus, as well as an extra +1 for every extra 5 points by which your attack exceeds the target's Defense. For ranged weapons, you apply the lowest range increment of both.

If the secondary weapon has special effects, you can choose to apply these or the extra damage bonus, but not both at the same time. If the secondary weapon has a wider critical hit range than the primary weapon and you score a critical hit with a roll in that range, but not the range of the primary weapon, the critical bonus damage is +2 instead of +5. You do not add your Strength bonus to damage for the secondary weapon when using Twin Weapon Strike, and the total damage bonus cannot exceed the setting's power level. Attacking with a secondary weapon in the off-hand still incurs a –4 penalty to attack rolls unless you have the Ambidexterity feat.

POWERS AS MARTIAL ARTS

You can create any technique imaginable using the options for powers found already in *Mutants & Masterminds* and combining them with the options presented in this book. The following powers are examples of pre-assembled options that portray some hallmarks of martial arts manga.

CHI SENSE

Effect: Sensory	**Action:** None (passive)
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Continuous
Cost: 1 point per rank	

You can sense the flows of chi in a person and an area. This is a non-visual sense that provides general information about the "chi spectrum."

- **Basic Chi Sense (2 ranks):** You can sense the flows of chi by concentrating as a move action and making a Notice check. With a basic chi sense, you can detect chi powers and effects with lasting and continuous durations, the presence of disease and poison (as an imbalance in the flows of chi), a target's Chi Level (see **Chi Level** in the **Martial Arts in Play** section), the presence of living things (as creatures with a healthy flow of chi), undead things (as a hole in the normal flow of chi), holy or powerful places, as well as some ambient magical effects and items (as heavy concentrations of chi). This is the Detect ability, specifying chi (1 rank), with the possibility of making ranged Notice checks (1 rank). At this point, your chi sense is neither accurate nor acute.
- **Innate Chi Sense (1 rank):** Your basic chi sense is an innate part of your senses. You can make Notice checks to sense chi as a free action and as a reaction to sudden changes in the normal chi flows, just like any normal sense.
- The different sense enhancements and additional senses from the Super-Senses power can be interpreted as different chi senses or mastery of chi perceptions as follows:
- **Accurate (2 ranks):** An accurate chi sense allows you to pinpoint chi effects that you can perceive, either with a basic chi sense or an awareness of chi phenomena.
- **Acute (1 rank):** An acute chi sense allows you to read the flows of

MARTIAL ARTS POWERS

NAME	EFFECT	ACTION	RANGE	DURATION	SAVE	COST
Chi Sense	Sensory	None (passive)	Personal	Continuous	-	1/rank
Climbing Kick	Attack	Standard	Touch	Instant	Toughness (see text)	2/rank
Devastating Blast	Attack	Standard	Touch	Instant	Reflex and Toughness (see text)	2/rank
Disrupt Chi	Trait	Standard	Touch	Instant (L)	Fortitude	2/rank
Flash Step	Movement	Move	Personal	Instant	-	3 points
Meteor Strike	Attack	Standard	Cone area	Instant	Reflex	3/rank

chi to discern exact information with a normal Notice check, as you can clearly see chi forming lines and patterns. Your Notice check must be equal or higher than 15 + Will bonus of the target you want to read (you automatically succeed at reading targets with nonexistent Wisdom). You can discern what power has been used and recognize the user's chi signature, the nature and effects of a particular disease or poison, the number of living and undead creatures in your presence (you need an accurate chi sense to pinpoint them), the purpose and effect of magical sites and devices, etc. You can identify people by perceiving their "chi signature," which gives you their exact Chi Level and, if the GM permits, a general list of their chi-based powers as well as their Constitution and Wisdom traits. You will know the best way to counter chi-based powers as you read their characteristics correctly. Being able to read chi does not automatically allow you to identify things like diseases or chi signatures. It merely provides you with the necessary information to make Knowledge checks for related specialties such as arcane lore, life sciences, and martial arts.

- **Awareness (1 rank):** You may not have the ability to sense chi, but with a normal Notice check, you're always aware of when someone uses a chi-based power around you.
- **Danger Sense (1 rank):** You can sense sharp disturbances in the flows of chi that warn you of danger.
- **Post- and Precognition (4 ranks each):** You can either read the signatures of chi to see what transpired in the past or interpret the fortunes in the flows of chi to perceive what may transpire in the future.
- **Radius (1 rank):** You can sense your entire surroundings as flows and eddies of chi. Adding accurate effectively lets you see in the dark without penalties, offsetting a blindness Disability drawback. You are blinded in areas without chi, and you cannot perceive undead creatures that have abnormal chi flows (you need a basic chi sense for that). Also, you cannot make out any details of any kind unless your chi-based blindsight is acute.

CLIMBING KICK

Effect: Attack	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 2 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Toughness and special (see text)

You can launch a powerful kick that literally sends your opponent flying. Your kick deals damage equal to its rank, and if you hit, you must make a power check opposed by your target's Strength or Dexterity check (whichever is better). If you win, your attack is treated as a knockback, even if you didn't stun your target, and the target falls prone.

POWER FEATS

- **Up in the Air:** You can choose the direction in which you send your opponent flying, including up. Your target may suffer falling damage if the distance she's knocked back is far enough into the air.

DEVASTATING BLAST

Effect: Attack	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 2 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Reflex and Toughness (see below)

You can charge a powerful blast that can vaporize anything in its patch. For each standard action that you spend charging, you gain one rank of the power, up to the maximum you purchased. You can set it loose at any time, although you might be interrupted, in which case you must make a Concentration check in order to keep charging. The blast shoots out in a line 5 feet wide and (rank x 25) feet long. Anyone caught in this line must make a Reflex save (DC 10 + rank achieved by the charge), with success halving the damage bonus. The blast is considered Penetrating against Impervious Toughness.

POWER FEATS

- **Improved Area:** Each time you take this feat, increase the power's length by 25 feet.
- **Improved Charge:** For each rank in this power feat, increase the number of ranks charged by each standard action. You can gain a maximum number of ranks equal to half your Devastating Blast or 3, whichever is less.

DISRUPT CHI

Effect: Trait	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Instant (Lasting)
Cost: 2 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Fortitude

You can strike precisely into the nodes where chi flows cross in a human body, forcing them closed with your own chi. If you successfully strike a target with this power, she must make a Fortitude save or have her chi clogged, preventing her from using any chi power. The target gets a new saving throw each round, with a cumulative +1 bonus for every new attempt until a successful save, representing her chi flow reasserting itself.

POWER FEATS

- **Alternate Power/Linked:** Once you master the ability to clog others' chi, you can refine your technique, either learning other ways to disrupt chi or expanding the effects of this power. You can take the following powers as alternate powers or have the full powers Linked to Disrupt Chi: Dazzle (chi senses), Drain, Fatigue, Nauseate, Paralyze, Snare, or Stun.

FLASH STEP

Effect: Movement	**Action:** Move
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 3 points	

Your combat speed is so great that ordinary people literally cannot see you move; they can only see your enemy writhe in pain suddenly, as you sheathe your weapon in her back with a knowing smirk. You can move at any point within a 100-foot range, perform any standard action, and return to your starting point (or stay there if you wish), leaving only blur lines in your wake. You can only step towards a location that you can see, and you should be able to reach it with your normal movement.

POWER FEATS

- **Combo Element:** You can make your Flash Step into part of a sequence that builds up to a deadly Combo Finish power.

METEOR STRIKE

Effect: Attack	**Action:** Standard
Range: Cone area	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 3 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Reflex

By concentrating your chi in your arm, you're able to rain a shower of blows in front of you, as inescapable as it is destructive. Make a normal melee attack roll against everyone in front of you inside a cone area with a length and width of 10 ft. per rank; for every 2 points by which you exceed each target's Defense, the damage goes up by +1, with a maximum of +5.

CHAPTER 5: PETS



Once upon a time in Marketingland, heroic Executives searched for the Holy Grail of their trade, a concept that would appeal to both the boys and girls demographics. For years, they looked in vain, until a Marketing Executive from the Land of the Rising Sun stumbled upon the answer—cute and cuddly creatures... beating the crap out of each other.

Thus was born Pokémon, scourge of airwaves and specialized store shelves.

Pets and familiars have a long history in manga and anime, as the magical girl's pet and mentor, and in videogames, as the summon spells of the heroes of *Final Fantasy*, but they didn't deserve their own genre until the arrival of the Pokémon multimedia phenomenon, where anime, trading cards, and console games supported each other and spiraled out of control as a merchandising dream come true. Copycats and knock-offs soon came forward, each trying to take a piece of the pie while it was still warm, and they included servants that were not that cute to begin with, but nevertheless planted the seed, and the concept of the summoned creature that fights for its master is now firmly ensconced in the list of manga and anime genres.

THE PET GENRE

As with many elements of manga, the pet concept has its roots in ancient history. During the Heian period in Japan (794-1185 AD), court magicians called Onmyou-ji practiced secret magical arts derived from Chinese alchemy and Taoism. Among the secrets of these arts, collectively known as Onmyoudo, was the skill to tame and control spirits known as "shikigami."

The shikigami were invisible to most people, and reputedly, their natural form was that of a child-like ogre (oni). However, an onmyou-ji who tamed one could command it to take any form, including human. Manga and anime operate as usual when portraying onmyou-ji and shikigami; that is, with an open-ended artistic license. The shikigami may be trapped natural spirits, demons, or fallen deities. Transposing this concept to cute but completely natural monsters, sentient virtual creatures, or doll-like creatures from another dimension was not a hard thing to do.

Outside the merchandise-driven mainstream of *Pokémon* and its copycats (*Digimon, Yu-Gi-Oh, Beyblade,* etc.), pets have become more common, as manga authors have taken a shot at the concept without having a toy line as their driving force. This has given birth to hybrids with other manga genres, like the bloodily violent magical girls of *MyHiME*, the overly shounen heroes of *Shaman King* and *Scr.y.ed,* or the angsty psychics of *Persona: Trinity Soul*.

YOUR PET AND YOU

At the core of the pet genre is the relationship between your pet(s) and you. This relationship is defined by four factors in varying degrees: the difference in power between you and your pet, whether the pet is sentient and

self-aware, the pet's attitude toward you, and whether the relationship is voluntary or involuntary.

COMPANION

A pet that only serves as a companion has very little power compared to you, but its unique abilities can still prove a boon. A companion pet is with you of its own will, and its loyalty is genuine. Abusing that loyalty, though, will surely drive it away and, in some cases, even gain you a new enemy.

FAMILIAR

The pet is a special kind of servant and is bound to you by a real power. A familiar is usually weaker than you but has special skills and powers that make it useful in many situations. You can count on a familiar's loyalty, sometimes because its very existence depends on your good will, even if it resents the bond between you.

FRIEND

It doesn't matter that your pet is stronger or weaker, smarter, or even if it's obligated to be with you; if it considers you its friend, it will do all in its power to aid you, even to the point of laying down its life for you. Friendship goes both ways, though, and your pet will expect the same loyalty in return. Betray that friendship, and you will hurt your pet's effectiveness, at best. In the worst case, you will make your own life harder, as your pet may start acting against your best interests.

MENTOR

The pet might not be more powerful than you, but it certainly knows a lot more, becoming your mentor. A mentor pet will hardly participate in combat, even if it is more than capable of doing so, but it knows most of what there is to be known about your powers (if any), your role in the story, and maybe even a secret background even you are unaware of. Although uncommon, a mentor might be teaching you against its will, either because it sees no other choice to save the world or was coerced into the role, in which case it would be best to take its teachings with a grain of salt.



PARASITE

Your pet is not really your friend. In truth, it might be doing you more harm than good. Sure, it might have great powers that it's putting at your disposal, but it's taking something from you, too, and it's not friendship. A parasitic pet feeds off you; it's not a fair trade either, as it's taking the best bargain. In the most extreme cases, your pet might actually be killing you slowly or turning you into something else, depending on what it's taking.

PARTNER

You forged a mutual alliance with your pet, as one has what the other lacks. You probably share ideals, but you have more or less your own goals in life. In this relationship, your abilities are equivalent to your pet's, even if one is geared for combat and the other to interaction or investigation. The pet usually has some sort of sentience and a helpful attitude, at least, which allows it to recognize the need and advantages of a partnership with you. Sometimes, you two are forced into your partnership by circumstance or by a higher power, but most often, you enter into the relationship on equal terms.

PROTECTOR

The pet is in charge of protecting you, pure and simple. The pet's power is usually greater than yours for this role, and it might actually be the only way you have to participate in combat. The pet is at least smart enough to understand its duties, which can be a merely instinctual attachment or a sworn oath. If the pet doesn't like you or its job but is still your protector, it may be because it's obeying a higher power or is fulfilling an obligation, in which case the pet will hardly do anything beyond making sure you are out of danger, then leaving until it's needed again.

SERVANT

Between a slave and a friend, a servant pet feels that it owes its loyalty to you, even if it doesn't like you. It may balk at your orders if it feels they are unreasonable or stupid, but it will at least make a token effort to fulfill them. A servant is at least moderately intelligent and may have pledged servitude to you of its own accord.

SLAVE

A slave pet is a very dangerous thing to have, especially if it's more powerful than you. Whether by accident or a deliberate act on your part, you enslaved your pet, and now, its will is bound to yours. A mindless creature will not mind its chains, but an intelligent, malevolent, and powerful monster will do everything in its power to break the bond, possibly killing you in the process of its liberation. A slave pet has no choice but to obey your every command, even if it's suicidal; just don't expect the pet to like you very much after that. Treating a slave with kindness will earn its true loyalty to the point that the relationship, involuntary as it is, may become welcomed.

SYMBIOTE

You and your pet share more than each other's company. Your bond is so strong that you need each other to survive, as if it was an organ of your body that somehow walked off one day and gained powers. The healthiest thing is for you two to get along, because being hostile to each other will complicate things if one cannot literally live without the other.

PET POWERS

The powers your pet can use reflect the nature of the setting and story. Most pets have a very narrow scope of powers, which means that either you have to learn your own or you can have other pets with different abilities, if you want to be able to cope with different situations. Most pets fall within one of the following categories, according to their powers:

DEFENDERS

A pet with these powers sees a lot of hand-to-hand combat, but its purpose is not so much hurting your enemies but lasting long enough to protect you and your allies. A defender pet has a lot of protection options, some even redundant, so that if one fails, another takes its place to keep it going. Force fields, defensive teleportation, thick armor, and telekinetic deflection are all part of a defender pet's arsenal.

FIGHTERS

A fighter pet has powers designed to make it a terror on the battlefield, usually sharp claws or exotic natural weapons, like a whipping tail or the ability to roll into a ball and trample its enemies. Fighter pets usually don't display flashy powers but are loaded with combat options.

HEALERS

There are not many strictly healing powers available, narrowing the possible uses of a healing pet. Healing powers can facilitate recovery checks, but they also remove adverse conditions, such as stunning, snares, poison, and anything that could keep the heroes from doing their best. The critter might not be that much use in a fight, but everybody wants it around for the aftermath.

RANGED

The artillery of petdom, a ranged pet is meant to attack from a distance and *stay* at a distance. It combines ranged attacks with traits that make it more effective at shooting as well as staying out of its opponent's reach, with great mobility and speed and probably more than one mode of movement.

TACTICAL

These very rare pets can be a varied lot, as their powers are geared towards supporting their masters and friends, not really directly attacking or defending. Any power that would make skill checks and saving throws easier or unnecessary can be considered a tactical power, such as a pet that creates a thick fog around itself to grant concealment to everyone around it or one who can command concrete to buckle unexpectedly to impede enemies' movement.

THEMATIC

Crossing over the other categories, thematic powers all follow a central concept that also defines the pet's nature. Their powers are usually arranged around a couple of alternate power arrays. For example, a sylph servant, defined as a wind elemental, can have an Innate Wind Form power (with Flight and Insubstantiality powers), may use winds to unbalance foes (Trip), create dust clouds (Obscure), funnel solid gusts of wind (Blast), summon small tornadoes that create a barrier (Deflect), and send a message in a breeze (Communication). All these powers come from the other categories, but they are unified by the concept of wind.

The most common themes are elemental: air, earth, fire, and water, although Chinese alchemy contemplates wood and metal as well. Other themes revolve around philosophical allegiances (good, evil, Justice), mythology (angels, demons, exiled deities), technology (phones, harnessed electricity, security systems), and many, many others.

SUMMONING

The most popular pet is the one that can be stored or dismissed away, summoned to appear only when needed. Summoning magic is the easiest answer, but in more technological settings, pets are summoned or used through devices. The summoning device can be just about anything and have any justification.

A summoning device is a literal genie's lamp, which you can rub at will to have a powerful ally at the ready. Pets are "stored" in such devices, defying the laws of physics by shrinking and getting into devices not much bigger than a hand (open or closed).

Other types of summoning involve tearing open the walls between dimensions and letting your pet come in. Such dimensions present very convenient options, as you don't need to clean up after a pet that lives out of phase with your physical reality.

Much closer to home, the last kind of device is, basically, you. Pets of the spiritual variety like to sleep in a host, and when you summon them, they come out of you, either from your actual body or the corresponding spot in another dimension.

Summoning provides the story with a host of complications waiting to happen, as there will most probably be a session in which you are deprived of your pet for a short while when your device is stolen, the summoning is blocked, or you have angered your pet and it refuses to come to your side. Your pet will invariably return, after you have learned some valuable lessons in loyalty and self-reliance.

TOURNAMENTS

Just like in martial arts series, a story where pets are the central concept will invariably host a tournament to pit creatures against each other to prove which combination of pet and master is the best. This is a mix between a cat lovers' convention and an Ultimate Fighting Championship match, with some poker strategy added to the mix.

Synergy is the name of the game in a pet tournament, as you must be able to think on your feet and direct your pet in combat against another pair doing the same. The trainer who can best recognize the enemy pet's weaknesses and drive his own pet to exploit them is the winner.

Because in such a controlled match you will have little to do but shout, you can use this chance to talk with your opponent; challenges, arguments, boasts—all is allowed, as long as you don't actually attack your opponent.

PETS UNLEASHED

There are two ways to make a pet, the Minions feat or the Summon (Minion) power, which basically do the same thing from two different approaches. Each rank in the feat or power gives you 15 power points with which to build your minion. This makes it so that one rank in either trait equals one power level. What differentiates both options is what you can do with them:

- **The Feat:** The minions created by the feat are just that, minions, which are easy to take out of a fight. Each rank in the feat can either give you another power level's worth of points for your minion (15) or give you access to additional minions by increasing the number of minions one step on the **Time and Value Progression Table**. Minions created with the feat are always with you and replaced between adventures if they are killed, and they must all be of the same type.
- **The Power:** What the power adds that the feat doesn't have is flexibility. By using a power, you can easily add power feats, extras, flaws, and drawbacks. For one power point in cost above the Minion feat's cost,

PET RANK

The term "pet rank" will appear many times in this chapter. Your pet's rank is equal to the number of ranks in the Pet (or Minion) feat that you used to create your pet. All pets in a menagerie share the rank of the main pet.

you gain the ability to summon your minion(s) to your side, but the tradeoff is that a Nullify power can get rid of your minions quite easily, unless you also purchase the Innate power feat.

A manga pet works somewhere in between these two options, which is why this chapter presents a new feat category, as well as specialized powers and drawbacks, with a combined cost that is the same as the existing options, but offers both the power and reliability of the feat with the flexibility and usefulness of the power.

PET FEATS

A pet feat is a feat that you take to improve the options for a pet built with the Pet or Minion feats. Pet feats improve the functionality and performance of pets, but neither minions nor pets can take them, as they cannot have minions or pets themselves. Suffice to say, you need a pet to take a pet feat.

CLEVER PET — PET, RANKED

Your pet may not be the brightest bulb in the box, but through patience and effort, you've taught it to do more than what other pets of its class could do. For each rank in this feat, you teach a dumb pet (a pet with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2) four extra tricks.

PET FEATS

FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
PET FEATS	
Clever Pet (+)	Your dumb pet knows 4 extra tricks
Diverse Menagerie (+)	Your pets can be of different types
Heroic Companions (+)	Your pets are not minions, but heroes themselves
Improved Loyalty (+)	Your pets are fanatical towards you
Menagerie (+)	You have more than one pet
Pet Interpose	You and your pets protect each other from harm
Pet Order (+)	Your pet is trained to follow two special orders
Quick Command	You can give your pet a free command in your turn
Reflexive Command	Spend a hero point to give your pet a command as a reaction
Tactical Command (+)	Your pets can perform the same order with different parameters
Telepathic Link (+)	Communicate and share your pets' senses mentally over a distance
FORTUNE FEATS	
Reflexive Command	Spend a hero point to give your pet a command as a reaction
GENERAL FEATS	
Pet (+)	You have a pet to protect and help you

DIVERSE MENAGERIE — PET, RANKED

The pets in your menagerie have different traits amongst themselves but still belong to the same general type (water elementals, nature spirits, etc). This feat allows you to have a menagerie composed of varied creatures in a broad category (elementals, animals, demons, robots, etc.) When gaining this feat, you *must* purchase a number of ranks in this feat equal to twice your pet's rank. If the number of ranks in this feat is ever lower than twice your pet's rank, you lose all your unique pets and keep only the identical ones.

HEROIC COMPANIONS — PET, RANKED

Your pet or menagerie are not subject to the minion rules (see *Mutants & Masterminds*, page 163), but rather are treated like normal non-player characters. When gaining this feat, you *must* purchase a number of ranks in this feat equal to your pet's rank. If the number of ranks in this feat is ever lower than your pet ranks, your entire menagerie ceases to be heroic and is subject once more to the minion rules.

IMPROVED LOYALTY — PET, RANKED

The attitude of your pet or menagerie towards you improves to fanatical rather than helpful. When gaining this feat, you *must* purchase a number of ranks in this feat equal to your pet's rank. If the number of ranks in this feat is ever lower than your pet ranks, your entire menagerie loses its loyalty and becomes helpful rather than fanatical.

MENAGERIE — PET, RANKED

You have more than one pet following you around. For each rank in this feat, the number of pets in your care increases by one step on the **Time and Value Progression Table**. All additional pets have the same rank and the same type as your original pet, although their traits may vary *slightly*. When one of the pets in your menagerie dies, you recover its pet points cost so you can create another pet. You cannot trade the pet points for a dead pet in a menagerie for power points; you can only create another pet with them.

PET — GENERAL, RANKED

You have successfully captured and tamed a creature to serve you as a special pet. You receive (rank × 15) pet points that you can use to create your pet as if they were power points for an independent character. Pets are subject to the normal power level limits and cannot have minions, pets, or sidekicks themselves. Your pet has a helpful attitude and is subject to the normal rules for minions (see *Mutants & Masterminds*, page 163). If your pet dies, you recover its pet points cost so you can create another pet. You may trade these pet points for power points by dividing them by 15.

PET INTERPOSE — PET

You and your pet can protect each other. Once per round, when either you or your pet is targeted by an attack, you can move your normal movement (or the pet can move its normal movement) as a reaction to intercept that attack, becoming the new target. The protecting character moves to where the ally is, and the ally moves to any space adjacent to the protecting character's location. If the attack hits, the new target suffers the effect normally. If the attack misses, it misses both the protector and the protectee. You must declare you or your pet is using this option before the attack roll is made. You cannot use this feat if the protecting character is stunned or otherwise incapable of taking free actions.

PET ORDER — PET, RANKED

Through training or empathy, your pet can recognize simple orders and execute complex tactics based on them. For each rank in this feat, choose two orders that you can have your pet(s) execute. See **Pet Training** later in this chapter for a list of orders and their effects.

QUICK COMMAND — PET

You can issue one free command to your pet during your round, in addition to or instead of the move-action command you can normally give.

REFLEXIVE COMMAND — PET, FORTUNE

You can spend a hero point to issue a command to your pet as a reaction. Your pet will be able to follow your command at the same moment that you give it, except if the command entails a full action or extra effort, in which case your pet will not be able to follow it until its next turn.

TACTICAL COMMAND — PET, RANKED

Through thorough training and a shared abbreviated language code, you can direct a large number of pets to perform different actions. Each rank of this feat allows you to select a trick or order that your menagerie understands. You can use a single command action so that all your pets perform the chosen trick or order with different parameters, such as attacking different targets, attacking as an aid action in support of other pets' normal attacks, moving to different positions in the battlefield, guarding different allies, or tracking different targets.

TELEPATHIC LINK — PET, RANKED

You have a communication link with your entire menagerie, allowing you to communicate without the need for a shared language and over any distance. Additional ranks in this feat allow you to share one sense with your pets, chosen when purchasing the rank. The sense can be any sense that your pet has, even if you don't have it. Sharing visual senses requires two ranks. While you perceive through your pet's sense, you are considered flat-footed unless your pet is within perception range of you, but even then, you suffer a –2 penalty to your Defense and all your checks because you're basically seeing yourself in third-person mode, instead of the normal first-person view.

PET-RELATED POWERS

The availability of the pet feats and the more inclusive role they play in a pet-centered series need a couple of new powers and options, as detailed below.

SUMMON (PET)

Effect: General	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 1 point per rank	

You can summon any pet you have created with the Pet feat. Your pet appears by your side and can act immediately upon its arrival. For the entire encounter, your pet gains the "summoned" descriptor, which makes it vulnerable to powers like Banish, Expel (Creature), and Nullify. It loses the descriptor once the encounter ends, although you can dismiss it at will, sending it back from where it came. You can only summon a pet whose rank is equal to or lower than your ranks in this power, and you can only summon one pet at a time.

A summoned pet disappears when unconscious or dead. Defeated pets recover normally, except they recover from death as if they were disabled.

UNDER THE HOOD: CALLING VS. SUMMONING

Summoning is more expensive than simply calling, because it makes your pet or menagerie available to you at any time and under any circumstance. Your summoned pets arrive instantly and start acting immediately to respond to any situation.

Calling your pet takes longer and requires a means of remote communication between you and your pet, usually the Telepathic Link feat. Your pet or menagerie do their best to reach you, using any movement mode at their disposal, although how long it takes them to get there depends on where they started from in the first place. In some cases they may be unable to reach you if there are barriers they are not prepared to bypass (like locked doors, for example).

You cannot summon a defeated pet until it has completely recovered.

POWER FEATS

- **Extradimensional Summons:** Your pet resides in an extradimensional space that you define when purchasing this power. It can be a whole dimension, like the spirit world, the Nine Hells, or Valhalla, or it can be a self-contained and compressed space inside a device, a dimensional pocket (a new one exclusive for the pet or one you already have access to through the Dimensional Pocket power), or even your own soul. Your pet gains the "extradimensional" descriptor when you purchase this power feat or a descriptor that better defines the dimension the pet comes from.

EXTRAS

- **Horde (+1):** You can summon up to your maximum number of pets with one standard action. You must have the Menagerie feat to take this extra.
- **Remote Summons (+1/+2):** You can make your summoned pet appear at any point within (power's rank x 10) feet. For a +2 value, you can make it appear at any point that you can perceive with an accurate sense.

FLAWS

- **Self-Banish (–1):** Any pet you summon cannot remain for long. Summoned pets remain by your side a number of rounds equal to *your* power level, after which they disappear. You can double this duration by purchasing the Slow Fade power feat (one rank only).

PET HEALING

Effect: Alteration	**Action:** Full
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 1 point per rank	

You can heal your pet. This works exactly like the Healing power (see *Mutants & Masterminds*, page 87), except that it only works on your pets.

PET-RELATED POWERS

NAME	EFFECT	ACTION	RANGE	DURATION	SAVE	COST
Summon (Pet)	General	Standard	Touch	Instant	-	1/rank
Pet Healing	Alteration	Full	Touch	Instant	-	1/rank

PET-RELATED DRAWBACKS

Although they grant many advantages, pets can bring their own share of problems, represented by the following drawbacks.

BAD APPLE

One of the pets in your menagerie doesn't share your other pets' high opinion of you. Choose one of the pets in your menagerie and decrease its attitude towards you by one step in relation to the others' (see the Improved Loyalty feat and the Rebellious Pet drawback). Only the chosen pet behaves this way to you. This is an uncommon, minor drawback, worth 1 point.

FEEDBACK

You are linked to your pet so closely that its health reflects on you. Whenever your pet fails a Toughness save, there is a chance that you may have to make a save of your own. The frequency of this drawback depends on what types of the pet's damage conditions ask you to make a Toughness save: staggered (uncommon, 1 point), stunned (common, 2 points), or bruised (very common, 3 points). The intensity of the drawback is defined by the DC of your Toughness save: 5 + damage inflicted (minor, +0 points), DC 10 + damage bonus (moderate, +1 point), or DC 15 + damage bonus (major, +2 points). Feedback damage is nonlethal. For one extra point, the damage can be made lethal or include one other, less common condition.

LIMITED MOBILITY

Your pet cannot travel too far from you. If your pet strays beyond its maximum limit, all contact with it is cut off. It just stops and tries to return to your side or does nothing until you are within range once more. Summoned pets disappear as if banished, if they exceed this limit; called or permanent pets will just try to return to your proximity. The drawback's value starts at 1 point for a 1,000-feet range from you, and it increases for each step down on the **Extended Range Table**.

PET DEVICE

You need something to summon or control your pet. If you don't have this device at hand, you cannot summon your pets, if you have the Summon Pet power,, or control your pet, if you don't. This drawback has a value of 1 point (uncommon, minor) for devices that are hard to lose or misplace, and 2 points (common, minor) if it's something you expect to lose every few adventures. Common examples are dimensional rift openers, signal whistles, and control boxes.

THE PET-O'-BALL

The Pet Device drawback works like Power Loss, but there is another way to create an object that can harness the power of a pet, be it a technological gizmo that stores the pet in an extradimensional space or a magical talisman that summons it from the Netherworld. You can use the Device power to purchase all the pet feats and related powers, although of course, you could not gain the Pet Device drawback for it.

DUMB PETS

Pets with an Intelligence lower than 3 are considered to have animal intelligence, even if they are advanced combat robots. In order to use them effectively in combat, you must teach these pets how to carry out your orders. This training includes teaching them tricks, purposes, or commands, explained in the next section.

REBELLIOUS PET

Your pet just plain doesn't like you and will resist your orders, to the point that it might even *hate* you and you need some form of coercion to control it. All pets in your menagerie have an attitude towards you lower than helpful (see the Diplomacy skill in *Mutants & Masterminds*, page 46). This drawback has a value of (pet's rank) points if its attitude is indifferent, (2 x pet's rank) points if it's unfriendly, or (3 x pet's rank) if it's hostile. This attitude affects all pets in a menagerie. The points you gain from this drawback cannot exceed an amount proportionate to the total amount of points you have spent on all your pet-related powers and feats: 1/2 for indifferent, 2/3 for unfriendly, and 3/4 for hostile. You may not take this drawbawk if you have the Improved Loyalty feat.

SPEECH IMPEDIMENT

Despite being smart and alert, your pet can only communicate with a single, cute expression, usually its name or the name of its species. This drawback affects intelligent pets only (those with Intelligence 4 or higher); it is counted against the pet points you gain with each pet feat rank, not against your power points. This drawback has a value of 4 pet points (common, major). You cannot take the Disability (mute) drawback if you have taken this one.

SUMMONING SICKNESS

Your summoning technique disorients your pets, who must spend some time regaining their bearings before they can act. Summoned pets are dazed when they appear. This condition goes away at the beginning of the next round. This drawback has a value of 2 points (common, minor).

CREATURE TYPES

Pets are not limited to animals. In fact, the last thing one can expect in a series with special pets is for them to be ordinary. The types of creatures available as pets depends wholly on the setting, and the GM has final veto on any kind of creature you might wish to introduce into the series, like asking for a virtual AI-controlled holo-pet in a series where exorcists call upon the dead to do their bidding.

The following are a few suggested creature types featured in manga and anime. To make your pet into one of these types, simply spend points on purchasing the template.

ANIMAL

While somewhat mundane by manga standards, having a normal animal as a pet is not unheard of, although the pet is usually meant more as a scout or general company rather than straight combat. Of course, some normal animals are downright vicious.

TRAITS

The common trait amongst these pets is their animal-level intelligence. These pets only have a trait of 1 or 2 in Intelligence, which greatly limits what they can do. Animals can know 3 tricks per point in Intelligence, as described in the **Pet Training** section.

Mutants & Masterminds already lists a number of animals that can be purchased as pets. You may make any animal a little unusual by adding some innate traits that cannot be confused with powers or that your setting can explain away as natural. For example, you can have a giant gorilla as a pet simply by giving a normal gorilla the Growth power with the Innate power feat, and it may still remain a "normal" animal.

- ***Examples:*** *A big, friendly dog; a trained attack hawk; a tracking wolf; a scouting ferret; a giant gorilla; a bat-like rabbit; a cat-sized combat beetle for bug duels.*

MAGIC ANIMAL

One step above normal beasts, magical animals have traits that their natural counterparts lack. Some of them may have near-human or even above-human Intelligence, which makes them unfit for tricks (most smart animals will find it insulting if you want to teach them tricks), but perfectly available for complex commands.

TRAITS

A magical animal can possess powers and unusual physical traits, and some may even be unlike any creature found in nature but still have a comprehensible anatomy and physiology. Take the template of any animal found in *Mutants & Masterminds* and add powers to it. For example, you can take a squirrel and give it the ability to shoot lightning with the Blast (electrical) power.

- ***Examples:*** *A telepathic rat; a riding unicorn; a dog scientist from a parallel dimension; a little dragon; a flying sea urchin that fights for you with its weather-control powers.*

CONSTRUCTS

For those who can't make friends easily, there is always the option of *making* their own friends through science! Construct pets are quite popular and therefore vary greatly, ranging from an innocent mini-doll that is more a sentient PDA than anything else to a city-smashing giant robot.

TRAITS

As machines or inorganic organisms, construct pets have no Constitution score and therefore come with 10 free pet points that should be spent on granting them some immunities that befit their artificial nature. Many construct pets also lack Wisdom, Intelligence, or Charisma, although pets that over time develop a "soul" will certainly have these traits. A construct with an Intelligence of 1 or 2 will be able to learn tricks as any other pet, although these tricks are "programmed" in rather than trained.

You can find a few ready-to-use templates for construct creatures in **Chapter 2: Heroes** and sample mecha in **Chapter 3: Mecha**. These are merely a base upon which you can build any type of construct pet.

- ***Examples:*** *An advanced soldier action figure; a virtual agent that surfs and hacks the net on your behalf; an intelligent giant robot that transforms into a VW Beetle; the droid replica of that pretty girl in school that your mad (and perverted) scientist father made for you; the small robot maid/bodyguard that goes ballistic if you are harmed; your customized avatar in an online fighting game.*

SPIRITS

With a clear supernatural origin, spirit pets can be explained by how the setting handles their existence. An ordinary person can gain a spirit "pet" by displaying shamanistic powers (even if seeing spirits is the only power), finding an ancient relic that imprisoned the spirit, having some sort of destiny



that prompts the attention of the spiritual realm, or even a simple accident that binds a spirit to the hero.

Spirits are any being whose natural state is incorporeal or invisible (or both), with any degree of influence on the material world, regardless of where they come from. The setting's mythology rules how the pet interacts with the rest of the setting, including other pets. For example, spirit pets might fight each other exclusively in an alternate spiritual dimension with no effect in the physical world or become corporeal and wreak property damage.

TRAITS

Depending on the spirit's nature, one or more ranks of Insubstantial may be required, along with Invisibility, coupled with you taking a single rank of Super-Senses for a "Pet Awareness" power that allows you to see it. If the spirit's Insubstantiality is innate *and* permanent, it needs to take a "reverse" Insubstantiality power to become corporeal, have powers with the Affects Corporeal extra, or have mental and sensory powers.

A spirit pet will almost always have a descriptor that fits its nature and its dimension of origin, such as "spirit," "nature," "demon," "celestial,"

ELEMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

ELEMENT	TYPICAL DESCRIPTORS	VULNERABLE TO...	RESISTANT/IMMUNE TO...
Air	Cold, slashing, electrical	Earth	Water
Earth	Bludgeoning, nature	Fire	Air
Fire	Fire	Water, cold	Earth
Water	Cold, bludgeoning, nature	Air	Fire
Metal	Slashing, piercing, electrical	Fire	Air
Wood	Nature, bludgeoning	Fire	Water

"undead," "fae," or stranger things like "energy being" (the Rynax from *Kurau: Phantom Memory*) or "archetype" (the servants of *Fate/Stay Night*). These descriptors are needed to tailor powers to affect them or influence them, such as Banish, Super-Senses, Nullify, the Limited flaw, the Vulnerable and Weakness drawbacks, etc.

- ***Examples:*** *The ghost of an ancestor who offers his aid to you; your inner animal spirit; a fairy sent by the Seelie Court to teach you magic; the genie you freed from its 1,000-year imprisonment; the demon your family is sworn to keep in check by trapping it inside your body; an overly belligerent guardian angel; the shikigami you learned to summon with your Onmyoudo training.*

ELEMENTALS

A subclass of spirits but also a general descriptor that you can apply to other types of pets, elementals are closely aligned with one of the elements of either Greek or Chinese alchemy. These are Air, Earth, Fire, and Water, plus Metal and Wood. Alternatively, you can include other elements such as Storm, Holy, or Aether.

TRAITS

The gist of elementals is that they are involved in a complex relationship with each other, as the powers of one can have a greater effect or no effect at all on creatures of other elements. The **Elemental Relationships Table** presents a common chart of vulnerability and immunity relationships. When you create an elemental pet, make sure to purchase Immunity to powers with a certain descriptor and the Vulnerable drawback for powers with another elemental descriptor. If you include different elements, assign them another element that affects them greatly and another to which they are immune.

- ***Examples****: An aforementioned lightning-shooting squirrel belonging to the Storm element; a red dragon belonging to the Fire element; a mystical iron golem belonging to the Metal element; a guardian spirit of the forest belonging to the Wood element; a bound demon belonging to the Hellfire element; the ghost of Miyamoto Musashi belonging to the Void element.*

MINION HORDE

A minion horde is not exactly a creature, but a huge collection of them that counts as a single creature. A vampire who can summon a swarm of rabid rats, a witch who can command an army of bees, or the expert techie who can launch a cloud of nanobots are examples of masters who have chosen to have a minion horde pet rather than a single creature pet.

TRAITS

Select a Tiny or Diminutive specimen of any other type of pet to define the base creature that composes the minion horde. This can be bats, huge insects, angry fairies, miniature attack bots, or anything else you can come up with.

- *Size:* The "size" of a minion horde represents the number of individual minions that compose the horde, not their individual size. A horde covers the same area listed under the **Space** column of the corresponding size in the **Size Table** on page 34 of *Mutants & Masterminds*. A minion horde has no reach at all and can only attack targets inside its area. The same table lists the power point cost of each size.
- *Abilities:* The ability scores of a minion horde represent the *collective* traits, not the traits of an individual member of the horde.
- *Insubstantial:* A minion horde always has the first rank of the Insubstantial power, representing the horde's ability to flow around spaces and enclose victims inside its space. This costs 5 power points, plus 1 more point for being Innate.
- *Attack and Damage:* The basic "unarmed" attack of a minion horde represents how all the members can gang up on a target. This is a Strike attack with a Shapeable Area modifier (corresponding to the horde's area) and possibly the Mighty extra. All victims inside the minion horde's space must make a Reflex save against 10 + Strike rank. Those who fail suffer normal damage, while victims that succeed make a Toughness save against half the damage bonus. This costs two power points per rank. If the attack has the Mighty feat (one more power point), the horde must also pay one power point per Strength modifier (for the Area extra).
- *Toughness:* The Toughness save of a minion horde also represents its numbers as much as it does the armor and health of each member of the horde. It's purchased with the Protection power, with the Impervious and Ablative modifiers, costing one point per rank. Each rank that fades, and each Bruised or Injured condition, represents a number of horde members killed. A horde's Toughness value should be very high, trading off with Defense to represent how a horde is easy to hit but very hard to take down.
- *Vulnerability:* While a horde can shrug off the effects of most spot attacks, area attacks can decimate its numbers in no time. A horde has the Vulnerable (area attacks; very common, major, 5 points) drawback to represent this. As part of this vulnerability, a horde cannot have Evasion.
- *Other Traits:* When purchasing more traits for the minion horde, treat it as if it was a single creature.

MINION HORDE TEMPLATE

Powers: Insubstantial 1 (Innate), **Protection** (Impervious, Ablative), **Strike** (Shapeable area)

Drawbacks: Vulnerable (area attacks have double their normal save DC; very common, major, 5 points)

Cost: 6 for **Insubstantial** + 1 per **Protection** rank (choose Defense PL limit trade-off) + 2 per **Strike** rank + Innate area Size (13 for Large, 25 for Huge, 37 for Gargantuan, 49 for Colossal, 61 for Awesome) –5 Vulnerable

PET COMBAT

Conducting combat between pets is little different from normal combat, with the main difference that pets have someone watching over their shoulders. Whether you as a master can provide effective support to your pet during combat depends greatly on which traits you have chosen and how they can benefit your pet.

Since combat between various pets is the primary focus of the genre, Gamemasters looking to run a pet-oriented game should look over this section carefully and consider the role of both masters and their pets in a conflict, particular the degree to which masters are permitted an active role.

PET AND MASTER ACTIONS

During combat, you and your pet are considered independent creatures, so each of you has one standard action, one move action, and a reasonable number of free actions. You can use these actions as you see fit.

- **Initiative:** For simplicity's sake, pets act on the same initiative count as their masters, when they are summoned. If the pets are called or are already present when combat starts, they act on the initiative count

their master rolled plus or minus their own Initiative modifier. If your pets act before you, they perform the action that comes instinctively to them (which includes any trick trained into them) until you command otherwise. They will follow your command when it's their turn during the next round.

- **Command:** This action is particularly important, as you use it with regularity to tell your pets what to do. As stated on page 156 of *Mutants & Masterminds*, a command is a move action. You can command your pet to perform a trick or follow an order (see next section). You may have to make a Handle Animal check (DC 10) to command a dumb pet to perform a trick or follow an order it knows. You can replace Handle Animal with an appropriate skill check, depending on the nature of your pet: Perform (rituals) (see **Chapter 2: Heroes** for ideas on new specialty skills) for spirits, Knowledge (arcane lore) for demons, Computers for constructs, etc.
  A smart pet recognizes all tricks and orders without requiring a skill check on your part.
- **Complex Command:** A complex command is a full action with a DC 25 to any required skill check. A typical complex command is ordering a dumb pet to perform a trick or follow an order it doesn't know but of which it is capable. For a smart pet, a complex command is a string of more than one action on its part.

PET TRAINING

Even the same kind of pet will have different capabilities depending on their master. The strategy you employ for commanding your pet starts before you step into an arena, though, especially if your pet is not particularly intelligent.

In combat, you can issue two types of commands, tricks and orders. Dumb pets must be taught tricks before they can understand them, while smart pets recognize them all. Orders are special tactics that *you* must learn how to give. In between tricks and orders, dumb pets can be trained for a purpose, which is a general collection of tricks geared to a particular role the pet is supposed to take.

TRICKS

A trick is a simple command that you can give your pet if it understands what it entails. Dumb pets (those with an Intelligence of 1 or 2) can only learn a small number of tricks, three for a pet with Intelligence 1 and six for a pet with Intelligence 2, plus more if you gain the Clever Pet feat. If you purchase a dumb pet with the Pet feat during character creation, it already knows its maximum number of tricks. For pets you purchase later, you must train them with a Handle Animal check (or other skill, depending on your pet's nature, as described earlier). The DC for teaching a pet a trick is given between parentheses below, and it takes one week of continuous training for the pet to learn each trick.

A smart pet (Intelligence 3-9) doesn't need to train, but rather already understands what you're trying to say with each command of a trick, although the GM may ask for a skill check if your commands are confusing. A pet with Intelligence 10 and above will understand anyway, although it may give you a condescending look if your commands are poorly worded.

The following are the most common tricks a pet can learn and simple commands you can give.

- **Attack (DC 20):** Your pet attacks apparent enemies. You may point to a particular creature that you wish your pet to attack, and it will comply, if able. This command also covers adopting or abandoning an aggressive stance.
- **Come (DC 15):** Your pet comes to you, even if it normally would not do so.
- **Defend (DC 20):** Your pet defends you or is ready to defend you if no threat is present, even without any command being given. Alternatively, you can command your pet to defend a specified ally or to engage in defensive stance or total defense.



- **Down (DC 15):** Your pet breaks off from combat or otherwise backs down. A creature that does not know this trick continues to fight until it must flee (due to injury, a fear effect, or the like) or its opponent is defeated.
- **Fetch (DC 15):** Your pet goes and gets something. If you do not point out a specific item, your pet fetches some random object.
- **Guard (DC 20):** Your pet stays in place and prevents others from approaching.
- **Heel (DC 15):** Your pet follows you closely, even to places where it normally would not go.
- **Perform (DC 15):** Your pet performs a variety of simple tricks, such as sitting up, rolling over, roaring or barking, and so on.
- **Seek (DC 15):** Your pet moves into an area and begins making an extended Search check (see page 53 in *Mutants & Masterminds*) for something it's trained to seek and that it can sense. You can teach this trick multiple times; each time it applies to a new broad subject.
- **Special Attack (DC 20):** You can teach your pet to perform a special attack action such as trip, grapple, overrun, or slam. You can teach this trick multiple times; each time it applies to a new special attack.
- **Stay (DC 15):** Your pet stays in place, waiting for you to return. It does not challenge other creatures that come by, though it still defends itself if it needs to.
- **Track (DC 20):** Your pet tracks a target with any appropriate sense, if it has the Track feat or the Tracking Super-Sense.
- **Use Special Ability (DC 20):** If the pet has one or more attack powers or abilities that must be "activated," you can direct your pet to use one, selecting target and effect.
- **Work (DC 15):** Your pet pulls or pushes a medium or heavy load.

ARCHETYPES IN PET-BASED SERIES

Series that are all about pets have their own archetypes, in addition to the more common ones already described in **Chapter 2: Heroes**. The Pet Monster Trainer and Summoner below depend on the availability of pets and servant creatures in the series, but they can easily coexist as the only heroes of their type, with their pets being a unique part of their powers that few or none can reproduce.

PET MONSTER TRAINER

A monster trainer doesn't fight his own fights, but it's not out of cowardice; it's because he has a much more useful weapon at his disposal, his pet. He can be a sorcerer that stumbled upon the spell that summons a powerful demon, a crocodile hunter type who just has a powerful animal friend, or a warrior who can detach part of his soul and shape it into a fearsome mechanical creature; in the end, he will stand back and direct his pet in the most effective way of dealing with any threat.

Examples: *Ash Ketchum from* Pokémon, *Takamine Kiyomaro from* Zatch Bell, *Yuzuriha Nekoi from* X/1999.

SUMMONER

Akin to a supernatural general, the summoner counts her strength not in her own magic, but in her ability to bring and direct specialized squads of creatures fit for every situation. Wizards or priests who know the supernatural fauna of other worlds, master inventors who can command armies of robots, or simply heirs to the loyalty of a ghostly army, summoners find comfort in the knowledge that, whatever may come, they do not have to face it alone.

Examples: *Meiko Rokudo from* Ghost Sweeper Mikami, *Yugi Moto from* Yu-Gi-Oh, *Subaru Sumeragi from* Tokyo Babylon.

PURPOSES

A purpose is a collection of tricks with a common goal in mind. It's a general training program used for dumb pets to optimize the time and effort it takes to train them. If you choose to train a pet in a purpose, you cannot teach it independent tricks, and a pet can be trained for only one purpose. As with tricks, smart pets have no need to learn a purpose. They are usually aware of the role they are best suited to play, given their own abilities.

Teaching a dumb pet a purpose requires 4 weeks of work and an appropriate skill check (DC between parentheses) at the end of this period.

- **Combat Riding (DC 20):** A pet trained to bear a rider into combat knows the tricks attack, come, defend, down, guard, and heel. You may "upgrade" a pet trained for riding to one trained for combat riding by spending two weeks and making a successful DC 20 Handle Animal check. The new general purpose and tricks completely replace the animal's previous purpose and any tricks it once knew.
- **Dueling (DC 20):** A pet trained to duel other pets knows the tricks attack, down, any two special attacks, and any two use special ability.
- **Fighting (DC 20):** A pet trained to engage in combat knows the tricks attack, down, two special attacks, and stay. Training a pet for fighting takes three weeks.
- **Guarding (DC 20):** A pet trained to guard knows the tricks attack, defend, down, one special attack, and guard.
- **Heavy Labor (DC 15):** A pet trained for heavy labor knows the tricks come and work.
- **Hunting (DC 20):** A pet trained for hunting knows the tricks attack, down, fetch, heel, seek, and track.
- **Performance (DC 15):** A pet trained for performance knows the tricks come, fetch, heel, perform, use special ability, and stay.
- **Riding (DC 15):** A pet trained to bear a rider knows the tricks come, heel, and stay.

ORDERS

NAME	DC	EFFECT
Assault	20	Pet's next attack has a +2 to its save DC
Assist	15	Additional +2 bonus for flanking
Empathetic (Effort)	15	You take your pet's fatigue for its extra effort
Evade	20	Your pet's cover bonus (if any) is doubled
Ferocity	20	Your pet gains ranks in the Rage feat
Herd	20	Your pet gains a +4 to Intimidate or attack
Improved Defensive Stance	15	Your pet's Defense increases by +2 when in a defensive stance or total defense
Joint Training	20	Give your pet ranks in one skill or combat feat you know
Suppress	20	Your pet's successful attacks can make its foes shaken
Surprise Advantage	20	Your pet gains +4 to its Initiative
Warning	15	Negate a surprise attack against your pet

ORDERS

Orders are a complex collection of signals and pre-arranged instructions that you and your pet learn at the same time. Unlike tricks, which you can command freely, giving one of these orders requires a skill check, as you need to interpret the current conditions of battle and adapt your signals accordingly. The skill in question can be Handle Animal, Knowledge (tactics), or new specialty or whole skill created for this purpose, like Knowledge (pet monsters) or Handle Pet. You learn orders by taking the Pet Orders feat. You give orders as a command action, making a Knowledge (tactics) check with the DC given between parentheses in the description of each order.

All the effects of an order last until the beginning of your next turn. You may "refresh" the effect by giving the same order again, but you still have to make the Knowledge (tactics) check, as the tactical situation changes from round to round.

- **Assault (DC 20):** You spot a weakness in the tactics of your pet's opponent and instruct your pet to exploit it. If you succeed at this order, your pet's next attack gains a +2 bonus to its save DC, not limited by power level.

PET MONSTER TRAINER POWER LEVEL 6

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+0	+1	+2	+1	+2
10	10	12	14	13	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+1	+7	+4	+6

[1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Bluff 7 (+9), Diplomacy 6 (+8), Handle Animal 9 (+11), Knowledge (life sciences) 6 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) 9 (+11), Ride 6 (+6), Stealth 9 (+9)

Feats: Animal Empathy, Assessment, Dodge Focus 2, Evasion, Heroic Companions[1] 6, Improved Defense, Improved Loyalty[1] 6, Jack-of-All-Trades, Leadership, Master Plan, Pet[1] 6, Pet Order[1] 3 (choose six orders), Quick Command[1], Teamwork, Telepathic Link[1]

POWERS

Pet Healing 4 (Ranged)

Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +2, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +4 (+1 flat-footed), Knockback –0, Initiative +0

Abilities 13 + Skills 13 (52 ranks) + Feats 33 + Powers 8 + Combat 8 + Saves 15 = 90

SAMPLE PET MONSTER: DOGBONE PL 6

Str 20	Dex 13	Con 16	Int 5	Wis 12	Cha 8

Skills: Acrobatics 7 (+8), Intimidate 11 (+10), Notice 8 (+9), Survival 8 (+9), Swim 6 (+11)

Feats: Attack Focus (melee) 3, Fast Overrun, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Grab, Improved Overrun, Improved Pin, Improved Throw, Interpose, Power Attack, Startle, Tail Flurry[1] 2 (interval 4)

Powers: Blast 6 (ballistic, tail end detaches and returns; Ricochet; *Alternate Power*: **Strike 1** [tail attack; slashing; Mighty; Extended Reach 2]), **Leaping 2**, **Protection 3**, **Speed 2**

Combat: Attack +6 (melee), +3 (ranged), Grapple +8, Damage +5 (bite), +6 (Strike, tail), +6 (Blast, ranged tail), Defense +6 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback –3, Initiative +1

Drawbacks: Disability (mute; very common, moderate, 4 points), Disability (no hands; very common, moderate, 4 points).

Saving Throws: Toughness +6, Fortitude +9, Reflex +7, Will +6

Abilities 14 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 18 + Powers 21 + Combat 18 + Saves 17 – Drawbacks –8 = 90

Dogbone is a curious crossbreed between a dog, an armadillo, and a dinosaur. He imprinted with a young boy to become his pet. Despite his appearance and name, Dogbone does not use bites and rakes to hurt an enemy, but rather batters away with the blunt mass at the end of his tail.



"DOGBONE! HIT IT WITH YOUR TAIL PUNCH!"

SUMMONER — POWER LEVEL 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-2	+1	+2	+3	+2	+3
6	13	14	17	15	16

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+2/+9*	+5	+7	+12

* When using Magic (Protection), ** works like Animal Empathy, but with spirits, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Concentration 12 (+14), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Handle Animal 15 (+18), Intimidate 5 (+8), Knowledge (arcane lore) 12 (+15), Knowledge (life sciences) 10 (+13), Notice 8 (+10), Search 6 (+9)

Feats: Attack Focus 5 (ranged), Connected, Diverse Menagerie[1] 10 (all pets are nature spirits), Dodge Focus 3, Heroic Companions[1] 10, Leadership, Menagerie[1] 2 (choose five other rank 10 pets, one should have the minion horde template), Pet[1] 10 (150 power points to create a pet of the spirit type), Pet Order[1] 2 (choose four orders), Ritualist, Spirit Empathy**, Tactical Command[1]

POWERS

Magic 7 (Mystic Blast 7; *Alternate Powers:* **Protection 7** (Impervious); choose one other spell with a 12-power point cost)
Summon Spirits 10 (Horde; Action (full round), Duration (Concentration); Extradimensional Summons)

Combat: Attack +5 (melee), +10 (ranged), Grapple +3, Damage -2 (unarmed), +6 (mystic blast), Defense +8 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback -1 (-8 when using Magic [Protection]), Initiative +1

Drawbacks: Activation (must make a power check (DC 20) to use summon; common, minor, -3)

Abilities 21 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 47 + Powers 27 + Combat 20 + Saves 19 – Drawbacks -3 = 150



- **Assist (DC 15):** You analyze the position of every combatant and instruct your pet to position itself to the best advantage. Your pet outflanks a target along with another ally (and thus a pet cannot perform this order on its own) and enjoys either a +2 bonus to attack or to Defense; this bonus stacks with the bonus from an aid action. Before making the Knowledge (tactics) check, decide if you're granting the order's bonus to your pet or to the ally that the pet is assisting.
- **Empathetic (Effort) (DC 15):** You can order your pet to perform a specific type of extra effort (choose when learning this order) and, if you give the order successfully, you become fatigued instead of your pet. The effect of the extra effort only lasts until the beginning of your next turn, but you remain fatigued until resting or somehow canceling the condition.
- **Evade (DC 20):** You trace a safe route for your pet to follow in the battlefield. If the order succeeds, all the cover bonuses your pet enjoys until the beginning of your next turn count as double.
- **Ferocity (DC 20):** You can flood your pet with fighting spirit. If the order succeeds, the pet enters a controlled rage. For every 3 points by which you exceed the DC, your pet gains a rank in the Rage feat until the beginning of your next turn (the bonus to Strength damage is limited by PL). A smart pet may choose not to rage, even if it has the bonus ranks.
- **Herd (DC 20):** You direct your pet to force a target to move to a position you want. When you successfully give this order, your pet gains a +4 bonus to Intimidate checks or attack rolls made with the intention to rush in the desired direction.
- **Improved Defensive Stance (DC 15):** A successful order prompts your pet to assume a defensive stance or perform a total defense (your choice when giving the order). In addition, if you succeed at the order, your pet gains an additional +2 bonus to Defense, not limited by power level.
- **Joint Training (DC 20):** Your pet has seen what you can do, and you can order it to mimic you. A successful order grants your pet one rank in a general, combat, or skill feat you know, chosen when you give the order.
- **Suppress (DC 20):** You order your pet to assume a ferocious stance to intimidate opponents. When you succeed at this order, opponents within 25 feet of your pet must make a Will save (DC 10 + pet's rank) when your pet successfully damages one of their number. If they fail, they are shaken for a full round. You may learn this order multiple times; each time it moves the pet's range one step up the **Time and Value Progression Table**, adds +2 to the Will save DC, or increases the shaken condition's duration by one round.
- **Surprise Advantage (DC 20):** If given successfully, this order moves a pet up in the initiative order, adding a +4 to its original Initiative roll.
- **Warning (DC 15):** If you are aware of a target that for some reason your pet is not, you can shout out a warning. Until the beginning of your next turn, your pet is immune to surprise attacks from that target and has a +2 bonus to Notice checks to perceive that target. If the pet is already aware of the target, this order grants the bonus to any check made to avoid a feint.

EVOLUTION

Just like heroes grow in power, so can pets, and sometimes in a much more spectacular way. In a pet-based series, heroes will show a growth of skill and understanding, but their pets will acquire new powers as well as increase the strength of the ones they already have. In poke-speak, this is called "evolving."

There are two types of evolution that you can portray with your pet:

- **Growth:** Like normal heroes, pets slowly become more powerful. This is simply gaining more power points to spend on your pet, giving it more, better, and higher traits. Make sure that you can pay for all the pet feats you have, since some of them stop working if their rank falls below the number of ranks you have in the Pet feat proper. You do not need to explain how this happened, since it's a perfectly natural process.
- **Spurt:** Pets may have an alternate, more advanced form that they can assume in the middle of combat. You can simulate this ability with the Alternate Form, Battle Form, Boost, or Morph (Metamorph) powers, depending on the kind of change the pets can undertake. Each power has its own characteristics and genre interpretations. Alternate Form and Morph do not really represent an increase in power, rather gaining new powers within normal limits or simply reassigning traits. Boost is limited to increasing particular traits, and Battle Form can add new powers and increase existing ones. Choose which power will represent your pet's sudden evolution and how it looks like. Evolution spurts like this must be explained within the setting's mythology, stating that pets of the setting's available types have this curious ability to become stronger for a few moments.

HORDES AND LEGIONS

A hero with the Menagerie feat and the Summon power can quickly flood the battlefield with his minions, even more so with the Horde extra. Things only get better if he has the Heroic Companions feat, as his small army is that much harder to take out.

In order to keep combat somewhat speedy when such a master summoner enters the fray, apply the following advice.

- **Minion Horde:** Seriously consider purchasing a pet with the minion horde template found in this chapter, rather than a multitude of small individual pets. This helps things by providing the visual effect of a small army appearing out of nowhere, while treating it as a single creature in rules terms.
- **You Summon It, You Control It:** The player whose hero is doing the massive summoning is responsible for keeping track of the pets' status, especially when keeping track of damage and harmful conditions. Number each creature to remember which pet is attacking which target or doing what.
- **One Roll, Many Creatures:** Despite the different abilities all the present pets may have, roll a single die for them each turn. Add the bonus for whatever action each will try, including skills, attacks, and saves. For example, your turn comes up and you declare the actions for the eight different pets you have brought to the field. The result of this "pet roll" is 13. Your first pet adds its +6 attack bonus to 13 to see if it hit with its bite (total 19), your second pet adds its +10 bonus for charging and its normal melee attack (total 23), while two pets collaborate to help a wounded ally climb a fence to safety for a total +4 to your ally's Climb check from the aid action of both pets; meanwhile, another pet is jumping said fence to make sure nothing is there, adding its +12 Jump bonus to the 13 roll (total 25) and its meager +5 Notice bonus to check for danger (total 18). Later in the round, two of your pets are successfully attacked, so you add their +4 and +8 respective Toughness to the 13 roll (totals 17 and 21 respectively).
- **Take 10:** Instead of rolling one die for all actions, assume that pets are always taking 10 for non-critical actions, such as skill checks.
- **Collaboration:** Have your pets collaborate on a single task, thus turning them into walking aid bonuses rather than requiring individual actions. The Teamwork feat will do wonders for this approach, giving you the chance to grant a single pet a situational attack or Defense beyond the setting's power level limits.

CHAPTER 6: GAMEMASTERING MANGA



All the previous chapters have presented at length different elements and options for manga-style heroes and settings, going into detail about such staples of the media as giant robots, martial arts, and pet monsters. With this salad bar, players and Gamemasters have everything they need to put together a manga series in which to play except one thing—the bowl. That is what this chapter is.

Although players are certainly welcome to read this chapter, the options and advice are more useful for a Gamemaster who is assembling every idea in the group into a coherent story and who will take the biggest share of the responsibility for giving the game a manga flavor. If all you wnat to do is pilot your mecha or give a vigorous *ki* shout before you unleash your power upon your enemies, you can leave this section to the Gamemaster.

ROLE-PLAYING AND RUNNING A MANGA SERIES

Manga and anime have their own little conventions, stereotypical situations, visual language, and long-standing traditions that are just slightly different from their Western equivalents. Despite being two adventure-comedy series about an unlikely hero suddenly in command of an alien super-tech device with a girl sidekick that's smarter than him, *Dokkoider?!* is vastly different from *Ben 10*. This section includes advice for both players and Gamemaster about going that extra mile to give your series a more "genuine" manga flavor.

HERO CONCEPTS

The many hero archetypes in this book give plenty of iconic roles manga heroes can have in a series, but they represent mostly what the heroes can *do*, not exactly who they *are*. For example, what kind of ace mecha pilot will your hero be? The idealistic enthusiast or the brooding loner? What will set apart the team of four magical girls, aside from their differently-themed powers? Who is the cute and bubbly one of the groups, and who is the violent tomboy?

The following is a list of hero concepts, small descriptions that go hand in hand with archetypes to define common manga hero types. While many of these stray into the realm of overused clichés, manga authors keep finding ways to twist them around, with their individual backgrounds, stories, and quirks keeping them fresh. Also, the concepts can and do mix and match frequently; some are traditionally specific to a gender or role, but new spins on old concepts are coming up all the time, so don't feel restrained.

THE AIRHEAD

You simply don't have a clue, but you're happy anyway. You don't understand why people around you are pulling their hair out with problems that look so easy to solve on the outside (not that you know there is an inside to them). People can mistake your attitude for either innocence or sheer stupidity, and probably you have a healthy mix of both, but that doesn't keep you from knowing what is the right thing to do, much less from doing it.

THE BROODER

You have no patience for fools who don't understand what you're going through, and let's be honest, nobody would, so it's for the best that they stop trying. Your motives are your own, be them noble or selfish, and you don't expect or even want others to sympathize with them. You do leave an opening for friendships, but it's so hard to find that your darkness may consume you before your so-called friends can help you.

THE CALM AND GENTLE TYPE

With a kind word and a soft smile, you can tame raging demons. Some may think you're oblivious, while others look up to you as a zen master, but the secret of your serenity is yours alone, and it hides behind that sweet smile of yours that can melt hearts and freeze guilty consciences.

THE COOL AND SILENT TYPE

A smirk can speak a thousand words, and you have memorized the dictionary. While not angry or angsty, you prefer not to talk too much or call attention to yourself. However, you have such an aura of competence (which you demonstrate time after time) that you *do* tend to be the center of attention. Your self-confidence supports your self-reliance, but you are quite willing to work with others.

THE CREEPY KID

Your smiling muscles have atrophied, and the most empathetic expression in your repertoire is boredom. It's quite possible that you're not even human. Your skin is pale, your hair is drab, and maybe a pale shade of blue. Your complete lack of expression is different from that of other serious types in that you ooze wrongness from every pore. Sexy wrongness.

THE ENERGETIC LEAD

Your enthusiasm could power a small town for a week. You're loud, impatient, and driven, even if your direction can shift due to your lack of focus. While you prefer to vent your excess energy in motivating shouts and speeches, tantrums and fits of rage are not beyond you.

THE GOOD-INTENTIONED LOSER

Things hardly ever go your way. You have no outstanding trait, and by many measures, you qualify as mediocre. You are, though, aware of your shortcomings and are working hard to overcome them. You try your best to do what you think is right, knowing full well that you might be biting off more than you can chew, but it's against everything you believe to stand aside when you could at least *try*.

THE HENTAI

It's not that you're a pervert, it's just that you're honest about the things you like and have no inhibitions whatsoever about pursuing them. You're usually male, but girls can be just as perverted. You can keep your deviance in check or go all out and endure repeated smackings as you chase after the object of your obsession.

THE HERO WORSHIPPER

You look up to a figure of authority. It could be an older sibling, an upperclassman, or the master of the mercenary dojo at which you train. In your eyes, they can do no wrong and they are everything you aspire to become. Your feelings are not necessarily love or even infatuation, just a very deep-seated admiration that certainly borders on devotion.

THE KLUTZ

You are irremediably clumsy. Your clumsiness might be physical, verbal, or both, and you always end up embarrassing yourself, especially in front of that special someone.

THE LAID-BACK EXPERT

You are slovenly, carefree, and may indulge in a vice or two... or three... However, behind your façade as a useless lout hides one of the keenest talents of the century. You act that way not because you're lazy but because hardly anything challenges you anymore and you need to get your kicks from somewhere. A few people may know that you are a master in your field and seek you out for help, but to most people, you are what you look like.

THE MASCOT

You are cute and everybody loves you; they keep petting your head like you are a puppy and raising their voices' pitch when talking to you. You might actually be a younger child, but it may just be your bubbly personality and still intact sense of wonder and innocence.

THE MOUSY ONE

You like to keep quiet and be unobtrusive, even when you have important things to say. You are usually smart and probably very talented in some areas, but your shyness might keep your potential from being discovered. You usually wear glasses, but it's not mandatory.

THE NO-NONSENSE SERIOUS TYPE

Your sense of humor and fun died an early death, and now you're all business. You're the person most likely among your friends to have a well-developed common sense and a clear focus on the goal at hand. You're not a soulless automaton, though. If people live up to your expectations, you will recognize their efforts and gift them with a friendly little smirk—then keep on pretending you left your soul in the bottom drawer of your desk.

THE OPTIMIST

You trust that everything will be all right and all you need is to keep going. You may or may not have any delusions about the nature of the people around you, but it doesn't matter; as long as you keep an open mind, an open heart, and a smile on your face, you're confident that you will see things through.

THE OVERCONFIDENT WISECRACKER

You have a roguish smile and a happy-go-lucky demeanor that tends to get on people's nerves, even if it still makes you popular. You act as if you know everything, and perhaps you do and your whole act is about hiding that you know what stuff is really about. Or maybe, you're just a lovable jerk.

THE SAVANT

There is talent, and then, there is you. You are the best at whatever it is that you've chosen to do, and people recognize it. You may be the best 100-meter dash runner at your local athletics club, the best operative of Public Security Force, or the best metaspiritual programmer at the Multiverse Traffic Control—the point is that you have a very well-deserved reputation, and you have the professionalism to not let it go to your head.

THE STERN ONII-SAN

You are strict and ask the highest standards of yourself and others. Especially others. You look down on those you perceive as under your wing,

demanding from them their maximum effort and nothing less. And if they fail to perform, you don't have any qualms about showing your disdain and contempt. Things are even worse if you're actually related by blood or professional ties; *then* you become a real pain in the butt.

THE TRICKSTER

Eternity is a moment long enough for a joke, and you feel like you're running out of time. You find it hard to take anything seriously and are always looking for a way to make others smile, or at least to amuse yourself. Your pranks, jokes, and jibes hide a sharp mind that simply refuses to work for a living, instead working for fun. Finding yourself in a deadly serious situation can be unsettling, though, and may shake your worldview a little.

THE TSUNDERE

Why smile when you can growl? You seem to be either perpetually angry or perpetually cold and aloof, treating others like the inferior beings they are (corporal punishment optional). But it's all a ruse; deep inside you are yearning for someone to endure the gauntlet of your mistreatment and give you a hug.

THE WHINER

"Why me?" is your motto in life. You don't want to get in trouble and just want people to leave you alone. You didn't ask to be the heir of some magical secret or have the only gene that responds to the giant robot's controls, you don't want to save the world, and you most certainly don't want others to force you to do something you don't want to do. You don't have problems voicing your concerns, either.

VISUAL STUNTS

The first thing that a role-playing game about manga and anime loses is the visual power of those media. However, players' imaginations are not limited by an animation budget, and there is no distinction between traditional and CGI art.

When you run a manga series, be prepared to use visual descriptions a lot, even perhaps using visual aids like screenshots of your favorite anime to let players be fully immersed in the series' setting.

The game already rewards players with a hero point for performing amazing stunts. This plays very nicely into the visual needs of a manga and anime-based series. You can reward players whose descriptions liven up the game and help others get a better mental image of what is going on. Some tools to determine what deserves a hero point for these visual stunts are the series' tone and the use of visual metaphors and clichés.

TONE

Because manga and anime can be so varied in each and every parameter, before you start playing you should have a clear idea of the series' tone, as recommended in **Chapter 1: Worlds of Manga**. Not only will the descriptions you give support the tone, but so will the attitudes and concept of the NPCs the heroes will meet and deal with, including contacts, minions, and allies.

You can even cheat a little by engaging the players' senses. For example, if you're going to play a gritty cyberpunk series, play in a darkened room lit only by a couple of cold fluorescent lamps while playing music that is appropriately hard-edged and evocative of a super-technological environment (the author's personal recommendation is the entire soundtrack collection of *Ghost in the Shell – Stand Alone Complex*, all four CDs).

Conversely, if you're playing a light-hearted series about multi-powered children (magical girls may be included), light the room brightly at all times and get ready to endure some cavity-inducing J-pop songs.

Since your voice is the players' only handhold towards picturing the action and environments of your series, use it to full effect. In anime, voice actors (*seiyuu*) are highly respected professionals, and the qualities of their voices have become iconic to certain character types, such as the actress Kikuko Inoue, who plays the gentlest and sweetest girls in the history of animation, thanks to her soft and pleasing tone. While nobody is asking you to become a professional voice actor, you can modulate your voice to reflect the personality of the NPCs you introduce to the heroes, which will give them a pointer towards imagining what the NPC looks like.

The same goes for general narration and description. The quality you give to your voice when describing any particular scene are the colors that will paint the lines drawn by your actual words. Using pauses and silences between dragged out words while subtle music plays in your music player of choice will do much better at telling the heroic mecha pilots that the massacre unfolding before them *is their fault*. A fast pace with a clear and loud tone will fire up the martial artists and make them eager for their turn in the tournament they signed up for.

METAPHORS

A cigar is not always a cigar. Anime is not that big on visual metaphors, as most series have too tight a schedule for directors and animators to get overly artistic (high-budget series as well as movies and OVA miniseries have more leeway, like movie director Mamoru Oshii's obsession with basset hounds), but manga authors revel in it.

A visual metaphor is an image that symbolizes something else, be it a particular character design, an actual symbol, a landscape, an event, etc. Since role-playing is an abstract medium rather than visual, such metaphors must be spoken and described, using the proverbial thousand words to replace the single image.

You don't have to be deep and subtle to use visual metaphors; they can be as simple as having your fire-bending sorcerer be a redhead with a "hot" temper who dresses in bright, flashy colors. Subtlety, though, does pay off, especially as a Gamemaster.

It's very typical in manga and anime for rain to start whenever the heroes are moody or facing some sort of tragedy or setback, and the media is rife with commonly used metaphors, from the crashing surf of the ocean to the fall of cherry blossom petals during the spring.

Listing all the possible visuals and what they could represent is beyond the scope of this book, especially as different images represent different things to different people. Just keep this in mind when you're giving a description of a scene, an event, or a character, and include little details like the cranes taking flight in the background of a tense encounter (threat of the villain escaping), the villain's quirk of holding a flower and plucking petal after petal as he talks to the heroes (his perverse pleasure at destroying beauty and innocence), the big red arrow pointing up that an energetic NPC wears on a t-shirt (her need for attention), the dust that clears around a hero when he lands after a long jump (great and awesome inner power), or candles that flicker as soon as the heroes' contact enters the room (hidden motives).

CLICHÉS

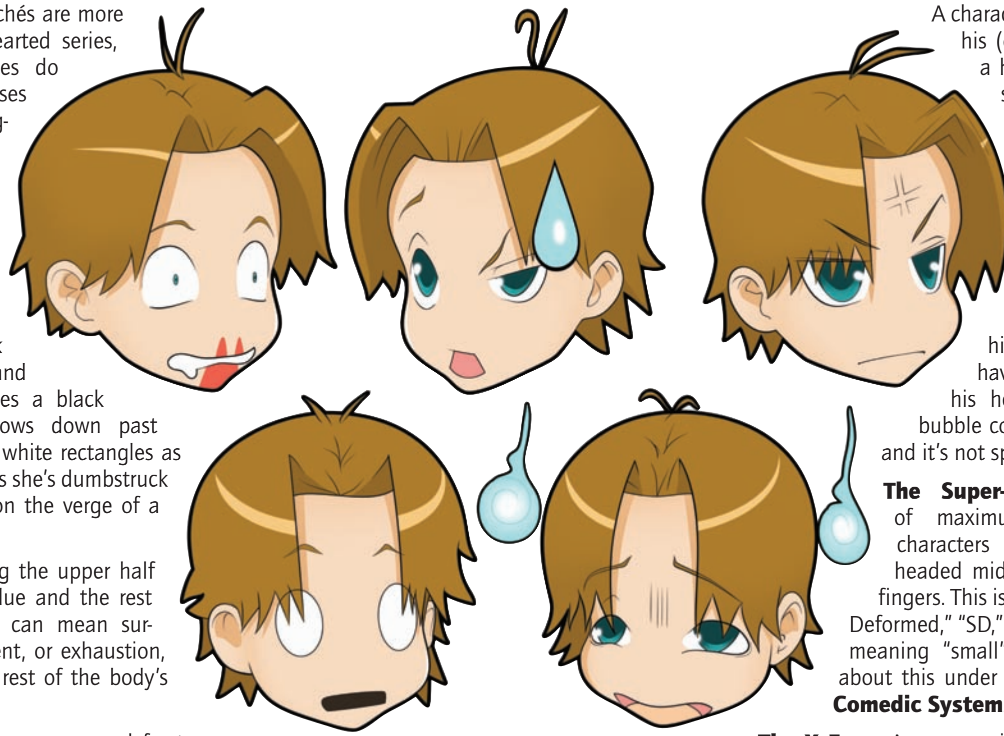
We are all fluent with the visual language of comics to such extent that we don't even realize that we are. We implicitly understand that thick bold lines around a character's head means surprise as much as we know we should read a page left to right, top to bottom, following the subtle hints in direction the artists provide in their layout.

Manga speaks a different language, and it's not only Japanese. Manga has some unique visual "idioms" that have evolved due to very culturally-specific notions. Some of these have begun appearing in Western media, but many others are too tied to Japanese culture to have any sort of translation.

While reading right-to-left is irrelevant to a role-playing game, you can represent some of these other clichés and visual idioms at the risk of looking silly, but without risk there's no gain, and an appropriately placed gesture can send the whole table into a giggling fit.

As implied, visual clichés are more appropriate for light-hearted series, although serious stories do welcome little parentheses of comedy to keep angsty insanity at bay.

Some common clichés that you can use when playing a manga series include:



The AARGH: When a character's eyes become blank squiggly circles, and her mouth becomes a black rectangle that grows down past her chin, with two white rectangles as teeth rows, it means she's dumbstruck and surprised, or on the verge of a fury attack.

The Blue Face: Having the upper half of the face turn blue and the rest frozen in a rictus can mean surprise, embarrassment, or exhaustion, depending on the rest of the body's posture.

The Bulging Vein: Anger, repressed frustration, exasperation, and some forms of embarrassment cause blood to flood the head, making a vein bulge in the form of three or four curvy lines. A twitching eye often accompanies this.

The Full Body Blush: A situation can become so embarrassing for a character that his skin color shifts several shades towards red, rather than just the cheeks. Sometimes the color rises from feet to head, where it's released as steam or a nosebleed. If you want something more subtle, just a few red lines over the cheeks will do.

The Fungus Cloud: Sighs of exhaustion, relief, and other expressions of release liberate a little cloud in the shape of a cauliflower.

The Ghost Flames: When a character is so tired and exhausted she might as well be dead, she displays two little flames over her shoulders. This is traditional of Japanese ghosts, just as chains and bed sheets are typical of Western ghosts.

The Giant Mallet: This particular cliché was popular in the 80s and 90s, but has since then fallen into disuse. Girls would reach instinctively into an extradimensional space and bring out a giant hammer with its weight painted on its head, promptly used to smash an impudent male back into place after a particularly lecherous (real or perceived) advance. The hammer blinked out of existence between shots.

The Giant Sweat Drop: Forming at the side or back of the head, this is a very UN-subtle way to represent confusion, doubt, embarrassment, and an apologetic demeanor. Lina Inverse in *Slayers* once pried a manifesting sweat drop off an ally's forehead to beat him with it.

The Hidden Eyes: Western media also uses this recourse, hiding a character's eyes when she's being duplicitous, ambiguous, or mysterious, or simply just too shy to expose her true feelings. In manga, this is mostly achieved by hiding the eyes under the shadows of the hair's bangs, but if the character wears glasses, these either fog out or reflect light towards the "camera," so that they are just perfect white circles that obscure the wearer's eyes.

The Nose Bleed: The Japanese believe that sexual arousal increases blood pressure, which makes all that pent up blood escape through the nose. A character suddenly holding his (or her) nose will tell a hero that her (or his) seduction attempt is succeeding brilliantly.

The Spit Bubble: A drowsy or downright sleeping character will have a little bubble forming out of his mouth, rather than have "Z"s coming out of his head. Sometimes the bubble comes out of his nose, and it's not spit.

The Super-Deformed: Scenes of maximum silliness cause characters to become giant-headed midgets with few or no fingers. This is knows as the "Super-Deformed," "SD," or *chibi* form ("chibi" meaning "small"). See more details about this under **Going Chibi** in the **Comedic Systems** section.

The X Eyes: An unconscious, knocked out, or stunned character might have his eyes replaced by a big horizontal "X."

A PRIMER ON JAPANESE (POP) CULTURE

Most manga happens in Japan, the same way that most alien invasions target New York in comics: it's what the intended readers know. While nothing stops you from setting your manga series anywhere in the world (like the excellent mystery manga and anime *Monster*, placed in Germany shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall), details about Japanese culture that you can drop in your game will help give it a little more manga flavor.

NAMES

Japanese state their names family first and given second, thus, Suzuki Yoshio is, for our western linguistic structure, really Yoshio (given name) Suzuki (family name). The following is just a very small sample of common Japanese names.

NAME EXAMPLES

FAMILY NAMES	MALE NAMES	FEMALE NAMES
Katô	Hiroshi	Yoshiko
Suzuki	Toshiro	Keiko
Watanabe	Yoshio	Kazuko
Tanaka	Kazuo	Hiroko
Itô	Akira	Yôko

People usually refer to each other by their family names unless there is some sort of camaraderie between them, earning them the right to address each other on a first-name basis. Both forms are subject to the use of honorifics.

Also, among acquaintances and friends, the most common name used for a boy is that of his family name, while it is the given name for a girl. Generally speaking, Japanese characters do not have middle names.

HONORIFICS

Honorifics are extremely important to anyone Japanese, acting as labels to indicate relative social standing between two speakers. For example, for a boy to use a girl's name without an honorific (to her or about her) implies a "close" relationship with said girl. Here is a basic guide to the anime usage of honorifics:

- **-dono:** An extremely old honorific used to address a high superior; would equate to using Old English to say "Lord" or "Lady."
- **-sama:** Applies to someone of high importance and superior position who is greatly respected.
- **-sempai:** Used with someone of higher standing, experience in your field, and normally older age, as well. It is often translated as "upperclassman." For example, a Grade 11 student might be a sempai to a Grade 9, as would be a veteran sergeant in the police to his new rookie partner. The person on the lower end of this relationship is known as *kohai*, but it's not used as an honorific.
- **-san:** Used with superiors and equals; generally equated to the modern Mr./Mrs./Ms.
- **-kun:** Used with "inferiors" (mostly due to age) and with close friends. This honorific is used more with males than with females, but it is not strictly masculine.
- **-chan**: Used with "inferiors," but denotes a certain amount of closeness between friends and is most commonly used for females.
- **-nii/nee:** Used with an older brother or sister, respectively, towards someone in a quasi-fraternal relationship such as a close mentor or an older person considered "cool" and friendly enough to be one of the gang, or as a way to address a young man or woman as "Mister" or "Miss." It's often followed by –san or –sama, depending on the amount of respect, or –chan when referring to a younger or very dear sibling.
- **-jii/ba:** Used towards old men or women, respectively, most often towards grandparents, or as a pejorative way to address an older but not-so-old-yet person.
- **O-:** An antiquated prefix signifying greatness and respect. It can be used together with other honorifics to form whole titles, such as "Ojiisan" for an old man who commands respect.

MONEY

The yen is the basic currency of Japan (properly called the "en") and is the equivalent to one American cent, more or less. This is *not* because it is devalued. This is because the basic unit for calculating costs of items is in yen/cents. There is no coin lower than 1 yen. While Japan *is* expensive, paying 100 yen for something isn't outrageous.

RELIGION

The Shinto religion is native to Japan. There are various myths concerning the creation and early history of Japan, but these are not as clearly detailed as those of other polytheistic societies, such as ancient Greece or Rome.

The teachings of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, or Sakyamuni (Shaka or Shaka-sama in Japan) were adapted and combined with Confucianism. There was some initial conflict with followers of Shinto when Buddhism arrived in the 6th century, but a dual form of the two religions was adopted, which lasted until the Meiji restoration of 1868. The Mahayana or "greater vehicle" form of Buddhism practiced in Japan developed a pantheon of lesser Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Bosatsu in Japanese.)

The Japanese imperial line is perhaps the oldest dynasty in the modern world, as it always held a sacred position as the supposed descendants of the deities that created the islands of Japan. Even if the emperor's power was eclipsed into nothingness during the shogunate, no warlord dared to just kill off the imperial line, for it would invite the wrath of heaven. Even today, the acts of current Emperor Akihito make waves in Japanese politics.

There are many superstitions and beliefs that are still in use in Japan today. The numbers four and nine are considered unlucky. Four, in one form, is pronounced shi, which is also the word for death. Nine, in another form, is pronounced kyu, or pain.

Japan is a country where ancient traditions clash with modernity, and it's not so strange to find medical diagnoses of "fox possession" for certain cases of schizophrenia. Little rituals of hedge magic are common and not necessarily restricted to the "love spells" found in the pages of teen girls' magazines. Shinto allows for a lot of magical thought, which helps make sense of why the original versions of *The Ring* (*Ringu*) and *The Grudge* (*Ju-on*) were so popular in Japan; they were halfway believable.

Shrines are built in the most unexpected places and still receive a steady amount of worshippers.

SCHOOL LIFE

School is the most common backdrop for manga and anime, even if just as a starting point for extradimensional adventures.

The school week in Japan runs from Monday to Saturday, Saturday being a half day. There are three levels of pre-graduate education, elementary, middle school/junior high (Grades 7, 8, and 9), and high dchool (10, 11, and 12). It is important to note that middle school is the end of mandatory schooling, and entry into high school requires an exam.

Once a student is assigned to a class, he's almost certainly stuck with that group for the three years at that school. The class itself doesn't switch around from subject to subject. At the end of each subject there is a ten minute break (the students are not to leave the class), and the teachers switch classrooms to teach to different classes. At the start of every class, the class president will lead the class in standing up, remaining at attention, and then bowing (in unison) to show respect to the teacher. The same is done at the end of a class.

Uniforms are the norm, and designs vary greatly, although the most typical are the sailor suit outfits and the high-collared black jackets of middle school. High school uniforms are a *little* more stylish, but some can be variations of those same ensembles. Uniforms are not seen as a restrictive policy for Japanese teens, but as a mark of recognition that gives a sense of belonging to the social group of the school's student body. As such, some wear their uniforms with pride. Students who are teleported to exotic worlds cling to their uniforms as a reminder of the normal life they left behind.

Lunch is eaten in the classroom, and some schools sell boxed lunches that students buy and then take back.

After school, students participate in their "club" or sport. Overachievers are limited by school authorities to a maximum of three clubs, but this is still quite high, as almost every day the club meets to practice, to gather, and to do whatever it is that their club represents. Examples include Kendo, Judo, English Speaking, Manga, Karate, Writing, Acting/Drama, Baseball, Ping Pong, Track and Field, Modelism, and Swimming. Schools in manga spawn as many clubs as their protagonists needs, and some manga are *about* such clubs.

DRAMA AND RELATIONSHIPS

"Drama" is conflict, and few conflicts can be more full of bitterness and passion than those that arise from personal relationships. Relationships among heroes, villains, and between heroes *and* villains spice up a story, or sometimes even become the story. Relationships don't have to be romantic. Family ties and friendship can bring great plot complications when played just right.

The nature of the relationships between characters depends a lot on the genre your story belongs to, as well as your players, who might not be interested in exploring their characters' ties to other people. Before the series

begins, ask your players what they want their heroes to experience in terms of personal relationships. The answers you receive can help you shape the story, as you plot and chart the heroes' emotional progression in parallel to the events in the story itself.

The **Relationships Map** in the next section can help you define what the ties between player and non-player characters look like, in case you want a detailed reference. If not, the relationships can develop on their own, and you can simply keep track of them as side notes in your series' plans.

FAMILY

Family can be a source of strength as well as the cause of many headaches. Unlike other kinds of relationships, you don't get to choose your family, although you may have some freedom during character creation.

While manga has its share of disgruntled orphans, many more heroes can count at least one member of their family among the living. They are there to annoy and badger, but also to support and defend, because in Japanese society, family comes first (just check the order in naming conventions).

In big drama, blood not only is thicker than water, it's also highly flammable and spurts by the gallon, so you can count on family members to react to the story, whether they are related to a hero or a villain (or both!).

When a hero's family are his allies, he has a default haven in their midst, regardless of the magnitude of his problems. It can be annoying if the hero doesn't want them participating in his heroic lifestyle and also very worrying if they are somewhat heroic themselves.

On the other hand, having family as opponents is incredibly trying and heartbreaking, even more so when they are not villains per se, but just opposed to the hero's ideals for their own equally valid reasons. When a hero faces a relative in serious and mortal combat, there *will* be a lot of words exchanged, as both try to make the other see their own side so they don't have to fight. Or, maybe the relative is truly evil and the relation will put the hero's loyalties in question, even more so when the enmity is revealed as a surprise.

FAMILY PLOT POINTS AND COMPLICATIONS

Your little sister turns out to be the key to unlock the power to save the world, but she has to die in the process. Your brother is the leader of the army that destroyed your kingdom, but once he explains his reasons, it makes *sense*. Your mother gave you away to a mercenary to protect you from the assassination plots of your own father. You discover that your ancestor was the greatest ninja in history. Your father turns out to be a powerful warrior hiding himself and you from his many enemies. The demon you were fighting turns out to be the one that killed your mother. Your younger sibling begins to display powers even greater than yours, with not even a fraction of your control. In order to achieve the power you have always craved, you have to kill your family. You are adopted, and your foster parents are really agents assigned to watch your progress. Your sister falls victim to the supernatural drug you were investigating.

FRIENDS

All manga with an ensemble cast features friendship as a very important value. Friends stick together because they like each other and can be at least as supportive family. True friendship is a true power in manga, with such unity being what ultimately saves the day, as heroes adventure away from their home.

While family is important, the milestones of a hero's journey are the friends she meets along the way, as they appear one by one, very frequently first as enemies who are then won over as misunderstandings are cleared and grudgingly forgiven. Childhood friends are particularly important for manga heroes; these are the family not related by blood, people who grew up and faced many challenges together, now bound by both duty and obligation that is completely voluntary.

Some characters will lend more weight to their friendships than their families, especially if they are running from a heritage of evil, trusting their comrades to help them in tight spots and willing to do the same for them. A hero can send a friend to perform some errand and expect it to be fulfilled.



A "friend" is the very definition of an ally, even if power levels are vastly different. A friend is one who will take out the wooden practice sword to stand beside the hero (who would be well advised to send his friend away for his own sake). A friend will keep the secret of a hero's new powers or help her with powers of her own.

There is no guarantee that a friend will not become an enemy somewhere along the way. Relatives can have a hard time hiding some dark secret from the hero, but friends arrive into her life with a huge potential for secrecy and deception. A "best enemy" is an antagonist who befriends the hero while staying on her own side of their conflict. Such "friends" respect each other in their own capacities and would *love* to test their skill against each other. A best enemy will let a hero escape because she can't bring herself to finish off such a worthy opponent or because she's nurturing the hero into becoming such a challenge.

FRIENDSHIP PLOT POINTS AND COMPLICATIONS

The new kid challenges you to a fight to test your mettle and, regardless of the outcome, recognizes your worth. A friend discovers that you're really the magical girl that's been all over the news. Your friend pushes you out of the way of a fatal attack, despite not having any powers himself. A friend decides to go off on his own to face his destiny without endangering you. You must cooperate with an enemy pilot to get out of a dicey situation, after which each of you rejoins your opposing armies. Your best friend is possessed by an evil entity, and later you discover that your friend *wanted it*. That mysterious racer who keeps pushing you against your limits?, it turns out she used to be that next-door neighbor with a crush on you. Your best friend is the controller who keeps sending you and your other friends into suicide missions without explaining his motives. Your friend has asked you to kill her if she ever becomes overwhelmed by the new powers she has inherited.

LOVERS

Few things are more dramatic than conflicts that arise from love, particularly when it becomes hate, and then love again. Most of these types of stories end with someone's death.

Romance includes the innocent fondness two kids have for each other as much as the torrid relationships of yaoi and yuri stories (male and female homosexuality, respectively). While Japanese society places many taboos on public displays of affection and emotional expression, they lack many other taboos that Western society takes for granted. For example, the Japanese age of consent is 14, and the relationship between a teacher and a student (or an adult with a minor) is frowned upon because it's unseemly, not because it's illegal (it's not). Manga has stretched and played with these societal quirks in many different ways, particularly in shoujo stories, where the protagonist's inner conflict is as much or more important than the exterior conflicts that are part of the story's events.

The "hero worship" syndrome many manga characters have for older characters is also something rooted in the Japanese phenomenon of the sempai-kohai relationship. It's not strange for a young person to develop a "puppy crush" on an older sempai, even if they are of the same gender. This is considered a phase the child will grow out of, but manga strings this along to create romantic subplots, even if such a relationship almost always remains unrequited and the hero who fosters it does grow out of it to shift his or her attention to someone of the same age group and "right" gender.

The most typical dramatic recourse regarding love is the Romeo and Juliet scenario, where two lovers belong to warring factions and are thus doomed to be enemies despite their feelings for each other. It has appeared with all kinds of backdrops, including mecha series (*Gundam Seed*, where Coordinator Athrun Zala falls in love with Cagalli Yula, scion of an influential Earth nation), ninja gore-filled epics (*Basilisk*, with the heirs of the bitter rival Iga and Kouga clans betrothed amidst much carnage), and more direct adaptations (Gonzo Studio's *Romeo x Juliet* where the young heroine is the last survivor of House Capulet, in a fantasy adaptation of the classic play).

While the most typical romantic subplot is the two lovers realizing their feelings until they accept and consummate them, manga has been increasingly showing the "what happens after"; that is, the struggle to keep love alive, not just to fulfill it, a struggle that can be further complicated by any sort of heroic activity. Within this formula, the tsundere romance (as in **Hero Concepts** earlier in this section) is popular, where a good-intentioned but typically incompetent protagonist tries to formalize a relationship with an irascible and violent girl.

Romance between a hero and an NPC is filled with uncertainties, and the potential or actual lover can become a tool for the Gamemaster to nudge the hero in a certain direction in the story. Lovers are subject to the same dangers as family, except that a hero's motivation is much more personal. In the same vein, betrayals and deceit amongst romantically-involved characters have greater consequences; it's not rare for a plot point to hinge entirely on a misinterpreted word or gesture.

ROMANTIC PLOT POINTS AND COMPLICATIONS

You heart is torn between the handsome, dashing warrior and the sulky, exiled prince, but the latter kind of needs all the support he can get or his depression might destroy the world. A rival martial artist will stop at nothing to defeat you, in the hopes of turning your girlfriend's heart around in his direction. You discover almost too late that the romantic date you expected was a trap to lure you into a vampire's grasp. A shy but cute girl confesses her feelings for you at the same time that you spot the girl *you* like rejecting a similar confession. The young man you like thinks you're a monster, but you're the only one who can help him when the villain captures him. Every couple of weeks, you discover a new fiancé your inept and unscrupulous father betrothed you to, while you try to keep the fiancé you actually like. You are too popular for your own good, and you keep getting proposals and confessions from persons of the opposite gender, but a promise keeps you from revealing that you don't swing that way.

THE RELATIONSHIPS MAP

While most common in shoujo manga, even the manliest tale of people beating at each other develops a relationships map, as friendships and enmities grow between the heroes, villains, and supporting cast. Japanese publishers regularly print guidebooks aimed at fans of a particular series, and most of them devote a couple of pages to chart the protagonists' relationships on a graphical map.

You don't really need a new rules system to draw lines between the characters of your story, but if you're out of ideas, a random visual reference can go a long way towards sparking complications and subplots.

PLOTTING RELATIONSHIPS

The center of a relationships map will *always* be the players' characters, regardless of how carefully you designed your NPCs. Supporting cast can certainly have their own relationships, but unless they affect the heroes in some way, they are not relevant enough to warrant inclusion in the chart.

RELATIONSHIP SLOTS

1. Have each player roll the die once and divide the result by three. This is the base number of relationship slots her character has. Add (or subtract) to this the character's Charisma bonus, as a more charismatic character will naturally develop more relationships.

2. Make a cast list of all the heroes and important characters that are open for having some form of relationship with the heroes (not necessarily romantic, mind you). This must also include villains, if for no other purpose than to chart a line of hatred from them to the heroes. Assign a number from 1 to 20 to each character. If you have less than 20 characters on the list, the heroes and most important characters can have two or more numbers assigned to them, or you can have wildcard slots to represent characters you can create on the spot.

2. The player can pick any number of relationships up to her maximum and assign them to a particular character, be it a hero, villain, important cast member, or even one of her minions, if she has any. These relationships are unilateral; that is, the hero is attached in a certain way to the assigned character, but that doesn't mean the sentiment is mutual.

3. If the hero has free relationship slots, roll a die and compare the result to the character list you made previously. The hero will have a relationship to that character. If you roll a wildcard slot, talk to the player and create a new character to fill that slot.

RELATIONSHIP VECTORS

4. Have the player decide what kind of relationship her hero has to each of the characters to which she assigned relationship slots, or roll randomly on the Nature column of the **Relationship Map Vectors Table** for some or all of the slots (re-roll illogical results, like having a parent younger than the character... although...).

5. The player must decide if the feeling her hero has towards each relationship is positive or negative, and give it a value from +1 (mild) to +5 (deep). Alternately, she can roll randomly on the Direction column of the **Relationship Map Vectors Table**.

6. Have the player decide *what* emotion her hero feels towards each relationship, considering whether it's a positive or negative emotion and how intense the feeling is. Take into consideration who the other character is, too. The emotion can be just about anything within the human experience, love, hate, admiration, envy, resentment, affection, attachment, devotion, etc.

7. Justify the relationships by providing background information, deciding where the characters met, and what could have happened to make their relationship what it is. You can decide at this point that the relationship is a secret, like two characters being long-lost siblings.

CHARTING THE MAP

8. On a blank sheet of paper, draw circles for each hero and character that has filled a hero's relationship slots. Using the players' decisions or random results, draw lines between the characters, noting what kind of relationship and feeling the heroes have towards the others. Some arrows may be double-headed, if two heroes agree to have the same relationship with each other or the GM approves a player's suggestion as to the return feelings of related NPCs.

9. In your duty as GM, take the map and make a copy for yourself, where you will draw the lines for the NPCs. As it might fit your plot ideas, have the NPCs reciprocate the heroes' feelings, refuse them, accept them with ulterior motives, or even have a relationship that the heroes do not reciprocate.

Example: *Kisai is a tomboyish martial artist in a school comedy story. She has already allotted strong relationships to her parents and a wildcard character whose nature came up as a same-generation relative while rolling against the table, so the player and GM decided that should be her little brother. Leaving things to chance, she rolls on the cast list and fills two open relationship slots with Hannah, an American exchange student (a player-controlled hero), and Hiroshi, her martial arts club captain (an NPC). Since they are both already schoolmates, the player skips rolling for the relationships' nature, so she rolls for their direction, rolling a Very positive relationship with Hannah and a Deeply negative relationship to Hiroshi. The player decides that Kisai has had a puppy-crush on Hannah from the first day the American girl arrived at school; she also decides that Kisai thinks that Hiroshi is a slacker that doesn't deserve to lead the martial arts club. Kisai's and Hannah's players talk things over and decide that Hannah doesn't reciprocate the crush, but she likes Kisai very much and considers her one of her best friends. The GM decides in secret that Hiroshi mistreats Kisai a lot (a reason for her hatred for him) because he's actually in love with her despite already having a girlfriend... Hannah! (with secret approval from Hanna's player, of course).*

PLAYING WITH RELATIONSHIPS

The reason why the map's feelings are rated from 1 to 5 is because they can come up in play as built-in complications.

Whenever a situation comes up during the story that is relevant to the characters' relationships to each other, the relationships' numerical value becomes a floating bonus that both players and GM can invoke by spending (or awarding) a hero point under appropriate circumstances. The benefit gained from this usually lasts an entire encounter, unless the GM determines that a hero or NPC used up her stores of emotion before the encounter ends, using the hero's Charisma or Wisdom bonus as a guideline. Note that, if a hero has a complication related to one of her relationships, the hero point she earns when the complication appears can be used to gain the relationship's numerical bonus for that scene.

Example 1: *A hero engages in combat against his cousin, who betrayed his ninja clan for power and thus earned the hero's deep hatred. The evil cousin taunts the hero to lure him into a trap, and the GM awards a hero point when he adds the +5 bonus to the cousin's Bluff check that the hero is opposing with Sense Motive to avoid falling for his cousin's trickery.*

Example 2: *A heroine is flying her mecha fighter against the clock, because her wing commander, with whom she's moderately in love, is about to make a suicide run to bomb an alien mothership. She spends a hero point to gain a +2 bonus to all her Pilot checks directed towards reaching and protecting her commander.*

Just like with extra effort, a hero that taps into her feelings for others to gain an advantage feels spent after she enjoys the benefit. While not becoming fatigued, a hero who uses a relationship bonus suffers a –2 penalty to all Will saves and interaction skill checks until she has a chance to rest.

RELATIONSHIP MAP VECTORS

RESULT	NATURE	DIRECTION
1-2	School/work acquaintance	Deeply negative (+5)
3-4	Childhood/old friend	Strongly negative (+4)
5-6	Mentor or protégée	Very negative (+3)
7-8	Relative, younger generation (child, grandchild, nephew)	Moderately negative (+2)
9-10	Relative, older generation (parent, uncle, grandparent)	Mildly negative (+1)
11-12	Relative, same generation (sibling/cousin)	Mildly positive (+1)
13-14	Current or former school/workmate	Moderately positive (+2)
15-16	School/professional rivals	Very positive (+3)
17-18	Enemy	Strongly positive (+4)
19-20	Roll twice, but ignore this result	Deeply positive (+5)

ATTACK NAMES

A venerable tradition of manga and anime is the heroes' penchant to name their attacks and then shout out those names whenever they are performing them. The reason for this practice is debatable. It could be argued that, due to the constraints of the static manga artwork and the limits of animation budgets, attack names became a necessity to distinguish what a character was doing, and the practice stuck. Another explanation comes from martial arts, where points are only awarded in formal sparring if the attacker shouts the target of his strike and it connects (in kendo, the only valid targets are *men* = forehead, *kote* = wrists, *do* = flanks/chest, and *tsuki* = a very difficult throat stab).

Whatever the reason, almost all genres feature shouted attack names, from magical girl powers to mecha tactical weapons. Using attack names implies a not-so-serious mood, at least during combat, although some very serious anime have at least mentioned the name of an attack as a valid codename for a tactic, even if the heroes don't shout it at the least opportunity.

A PUNCH BY ANY OTHER NAME...

As ludicrous and overwrought as some names can be, they always describe what the attack does and how. The kind (and number) of words in an attack name depends on the series' tone, with more serious moods requiring short and somewhat poetic or referential names, while more outrageous moods allow for complete sentences of highly colorful collections of nouns and modifiers.

When naming an attack, you can take a cue from its descriptors, modifiers, and parameters. For example, let's take the following power: Blast 10 (electrical; Line area; Linked [Stun 12 (sonic; dazed)]. A serious setting could name this Heavenly Thunderstrike. A more... permissive series could call it Fist of the Ten-Thousand Gods of Rolling Thunder (and this is still tame compared to some examples out there).

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

An attack name, like any other piece of grammar, is composed of identifiable pieces. There's a central noun that describes what the attack is, either by mentioning the weapon it uses or the type of attack it displays (fist, blast, kick, strike, slash, sword, staff, etc.). The noun is both followed and preceded by any number of modifiers, which may be adverbs, adjectives, direct and indirect objects, and sometimes even verbs.

Producing a comprehensive list of common name elements is impossible, since each series has its own flavor and themes that can be incompatible

with others. You can't use common elements of mecha attacks ("galaxy", "fusion", "plasma", etc.) in a wuxia-style series and vice versa. If you find it hard to come up with a particular attack name, have a brainstorming session where the entire group builds a list of elements appropriate for the setting you're going to play, and then choose from there.

The lists you should contemplate are:

- **Attack Type:** The core of the attack's name is the form by which it is delivered, and it is always a noun. This is the element that should least be left to chance, and it uses the name of the natural or artificial weapon that delivers the attack or a metaphorical reference (such as using "cannon" to describe a barrage of unarmed strikes).

  Examples: *Sword, Blade, Fist, Kick, Cannon, Volley, Staff, Spear, Palm, Finger, Strike, Impact, Mystical, Arcane, Psychic.*

- **Elemental/Energy:** These are the names of energy types relevant to the setting and actually available as descriptors for powers. These can take the form of adjectives or objects.

  Examples: *of Fire, Burning, Freezing, Wind, Plasma, Proton, Hellfire, Anti-Matter.*

- **Harmful Effects:** This is mostly what the attack does to the target in spectacular-sounding words, but it may also be a variation of the power's name or damage descriptor type. Sometimes it may replace the central noun.

  Examples: *Crushing, Slash, Devastating, Smashing, Cutting, Slice, Stunning, Calming, Depriving, Draining, of Death.*

- **Animals:** A real or mythic animal whose real or perceived traits reflect the nature of the attack or points at the fighting style the attack belongs to as a unifying theme, it's used mostly as an adverb preceded by "of the," or preceding the attack type's noun. The animal should be from a species that exists in the setting's world or myths (or both).

  Examples: *Dragon, Tiger, Hawk, Bear, Phoenix, Ki'rin, Crane, Turtle, Snake, Mantis.*

- **Allegiance:** This is a quality of the attack that likens it to a philosophical principle, as if the attack itself expressed the attacker's allegiance to a cause, ideal, or deity. This is usually reserved for magical or wuxia-style martial arts powers.

  Examples: *Celestial, Hell-bound, of Justice, Ancestor, of Vengeance, Thor's, of the Monkey King, of Yomi, Kwanon's.*

- **Natural Phenomena:** Very similar to the elemental and energy type modifiers, this uses the names of natural phenomena to give a little more poetry to an otherwise very technical attack name. This modifier often substitutes or accompanies an energy descriptor.

  Examples: *Blizzard, Storm, Lightning, Hurricane, Ocean, Tide, River, Mountain.*

- **Numbers:** Just plain numbers, these can be cardinal (normal numbers) or ordinal (representing order or hierarchy) and can modify any element of the attack name that is a noun.

  Examples: *Any... but common impressive sounding numbers in martial arts include 108 (after the number of heroes in* The Water Margin*), 10,000 (common Chinese way of saying "countless"), 7th (magical number in Western occult traditions), 4 (number of elements and cardinal directions).*

- **Quality:** This is a catch-all category of adjectives that adds some particular quality to the attack that is not already expressed with other categories of modifiers. These could be anything, including directions, names of places, colors, or textures.

  Examples: *Red, Rainbow, Northern, Universal, Invincible, Unstoppable, Unbreakable, of Mount Wudan, Streaming.*

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Take a good look at the power or attack that you want to name, and compare it to the list you made with appropriate modifiers (or come up with them right then and there). If you really want to randomize things, roll a d20 and divide it by 4 (round up) and add 1. That should be the number of words your attack name should have, with one of them being a central noun and not counting connectors (and, of, from, etc.).

Now, assign a number to each list you made, or to the eight categories in the previous part, making sure they range from 1 to 20. For each word in the attack name, roll the die to see what category the new element will come from. Number the options on each list in a similar way, and roll again to see which one you get. Write it down next to your central noun, and repeat until you have the number of elements you rolled up first.

Now, shuffle them around, connect them with prepositions (and, or), possessives (of, –'s), etc., and when it finally looks right, then you have your attack name.

Using the attack name can be just part of the game's color, but if you chose the Attack Name drawback, then this is exactly what you have to shout out each time you activate your power, much to the delight of the Gamemaster and other players.

FLASHBACKS

Manga heroes have a penchant to remember parts of their lives at the most inopportune moments, interrupting a tense encounter to reveal some insight about their inner selves or how they came to learn the powers at their command.

Detailed flashbacks are to be handled with care during a game of *Mecha & Manga*, for they have the same chance to be disrupting as being fun and enriching for the story.

The main problem with running a flashback scene is that it's about one or two characters at best, which leaves the rest of the players as simple spectators in another person's side adventure, while what they want is to move on with what's happening in the present.

Since flashbacks are such an important part of manga narrative, though, here are a few guidelines on how to run such a scene.

TURNING THE SPOTLIGHT

Any player should be able to ask for a flashback in order to explore some part of her hero's life, personality, or powers. Any player who wishes to start a flashback must spend a hero point to halt the action that is currently going on to introduce her parenthesis, which serves the same purpose as gaining clues to the situation at hand, only in a more elaborate form.

She should then tell the GM what she wants to illustrate in the flashback. For example, a hardened cop lady is analyzing a very strange crime scene. As part of the heroine's concept, her player had sketched out that the cop's mother was a psychic that went away, so she was exposed to strange phenomena in her childhood that could relate to the current scene. The Gamemaster evaluates the request, and if he judges that a flashback shouldn't be too disruptive at this point and might actually help move the story along, he starts the flashback sequence.

If things are moving along too quickly and the GM simply doesn't want to bother with a flashback, the player gets her hero point back if she wants, or simply a brief description of what her heroic cop lady remembers from her childhood.

CAST AND DEVELOPMENT

A flashback scene only involves the hero that initiates it in most cases, although heroes that knew each other in the period to be portrayed might be together in the flashback sequence. Any additional player who wants

(and is able) to participate in the flashback with the original hero must also spend a hero point.

This doesn't mean that the rest of the players only get to watch. The GM will have to improvise a little and assign other players different roles in the flashback scene, such as the initiating hero's parents, associates, enemies at that time, etc. Because there's little time to waste on assigning a complete collection of traits to characters that will not be played again, this should be mostly a role-playing exercise, with the GM adjudicating the results of all actions.

When all roles are given and the time-frame explained, the flashback scene develops as would any other game session, although the GM has full rights to stir the story in certain directions, especially where it concerns the "guest stars" that the other players are in charge of, as these roles are closer to being assistant Gamemasters than simply secondary characters.

In the above example, another player's hero is the cop lady's childhood friend, and he wishes to participate, playing a younger self that was there with the original heroine during her tumultuous childhood, so he spends a hero point to play his own hero as a child. The GM then assigns the rest of the players the roles of the cop's mother, father, and a mysterious person in the cop's memory. They start playing, with the GM directing the scene towards an event that would shed some light into what's going on in the present, such as the cop remembering the smell of ozone whenever her mother did something strange.

OUTCOMES AND REWARDS

The Gamemaster is the final arbiter of how long a flashback lasts, and she has all the right to cut a flashback scene just before a major revelation is about to take place, leaving only hints.

All participating players earn a hero point for their help, and the players whose characters starred in the flashback get the clues and development that they were looking for when they asked to start the flashback.

Any single game session should have at the most two flashback scenes (and that's pushing it). The Gamemaster can refuse a request for a flashback at any time, as too many memories of the past will spoil what's happening in the present, and what was an entertaining and revealing technique becomes an old and tired plot device if abused.

COMEDIC SYSTEMS

Even the most serious anime and manga can have moments of humor, and the outrageous parodies really don't pull any punches when it comes to producing strange and oddly amusing situations. You can use the following options to lighten up your game or simply not take the story so seriously.

GOING CHIBI

"Chibi" means "little" in Japanese, and it is used to describe the funny and cute art style that depicts characters as bigheaded midgets.

In anime and manga, characters can suddenly appear in their "chibi form" as a comedic parenthesis to the story, either spouting a one-liner or engaging in a funny sketch worthy of Saturday Night Live.

The Chibi Rule is a way to formalize a situation that happens inevitably in all gaming groups: someone thinks of something funny in the middle of any kind of situation and cannot resist saying it.

Rather than earning the ire of GM and players alike for ruining the mood, the player can invoke the Chibi Rule. That is, she clearly states her hero is going chibi and then spouts out the funny comment. To fall within the jurisdiction of the Chibi Rule, the comment (which can be a description of an action as well) must:

- Actually make people at least chuckle.
- Be made in character. That is, it must be somehow consistent with the hero's personality. Not only clowns and pranksters go chibi. Angsty loners have their amusing moments as well, even if only playing the straight man for others' antics.
- Have something to do with what's going on. Making a funny scene about the movie you watched last weekend doesn't count. Parodying a common genre cliché as it applies to the story at hand does.

If all conditions are met, the hero that went chibi gains a temporary hero point, which she must use before it expires at the end of the gaming session.

COMEDIC DAMAGE

The protagonists of some comedy series are more acquainted with hurt and pain than their action counterparts, especially males with a penchant for stumbling on females in the shower.

While most serious stories will refrain from having comedic violence, many have a healthy mix of serious action and light-hearted moments that do include some gratuitous, graphical, but ultimately harmless violence (*Full Metal Panic* and *Vandread* being good examples).

DECLARING A COMEDIC ATTACK

Any hero can declare she's dealing comedic damage when making any kind of attack. If the target is deserving of punishment as determined by the GM, there is no need to make an attack roll: the attack automatically hits as if rolling a natural 20. It's possible to score a critical hit by confirming the hit with a normal attack roll. Undeserving targets get a chance to avoid the attack by requiring a normal attack roll from the hero making the attack.

Visual stunts are particularly useful here. If the hero's player makes a sufficiently amusing or outright hilarious description of the attack, the GM can increase the attack's damage bonus. The victim of the attack can even increase the damage bonus, gaining a temporary hero point for every +5 bonus he agrees to, just for being game and playing along. This temporary hero point expires at the end of the gaming session. A target does not use Toughness to save against comedic damage, but the least of his saving throws.



COMEDIC CONDITIONS

Comedic damage is an additional damage track below lethal and non-lethal damage. Its conditions are Whacked (equivalent to Bruised and Injured), Stunned (as is), Mauled (equivalent to Staggered and Disabled), and Off-scene (equivalent to Unconscious, Dying, and Dead).

- **Whacked:** You display clear evidence that somebody gave you what you had coming. You have a very notorious slap mark on the face, a footprint on your clothes, a swelling head bump with a smiley face, or your perfect spiky hair is messed up beyond recognition. Whacked conditions may also apply a penalty to interaction skills, if the Gamemaster wants to be cruel.
- **Mauled:** You are in *so* much pain... You were hit where it hurts the most, and both the pain and humiliation prevent you from reacting properly. While Mauled, you may only take a standard action during social encounters, and saying or doing anything requiring serious thought or action can take you Off-Scene (unless the situation actually turns serious, as described later).
- **Off-Scene:** You were hit so hard that you were sent flying to lower orbit, trailing smoke behind you. You're completely out of action, and unless someone calls you by name or wants to interact with you, you cannot participate in the scene until you recover. In either case, you "magically" reappear in a mauled condition.

RECOVERY

You must roll a Charisma or Wisdom check (whichever is less, DC 10) as a move action to recover from a comedic condition during the same scene in which it was inflicted. You can make recovery checks each round for Whacked conditions, each minute for the Mauled condition, and each hour for an Off-Scene condition.

All comedic conditions disappear automatically the moment that seriousness is required, either because an interaction has real stakes upon its success or failure or a real attack is launched at anyone in the scene. Also, when the scene or encounter where you suffered comedic damage reaches its end, all conditions disappear, and you return to action none the worse for wear.

POWER TIERS

In manga stories that deal with special powers and mecha, heroes have access to abilities or gear that greatly increase their power for the duration of an encounter but are unavailable in other situations. A mecha pilot is a normal human in most cases, but she gains the power to demolish buildings when climbing inside a cockpit. Likewise, some martial artists are limited to their everyday training until they somehow unleash some inner resource they cannot normally tap.

A setting's power level limits its protagonists' powers, but in stories such as the above, normal limits will only define half of the story, which is where the concept of power tiers comes in. A power tier is basically a power level limit that stacks with another, creating a game that works on different levels of power. A story will usually have only two tiers, but complex settings may have more.

STACKING POWER TIERS

A power tier is like a separate series that heroes engage in when they activate the traits that take them way beyond their normal capabilities. In a different power tier, heroes can have additional powers, different powers, or entirely different traits altogether.

When playing a series with different tiers, heroes purchase their traits for a single tier during character creation, without considering the different tiers they might have access to later. All other power tiers are "freebies," as the heroes will all be on equal terms when switching to another tier.

The first thing to decide is what type of tiered setting you want to play, based on the story and the preferences of everyone in the group. After that, the GM decides the actual numbers, deciding how many additional or alternate power points the heroes will have, depending on the tier type and power level.

TIER TYPES

There are different kinds of tiers, based on how the heroes stack their power points.

- **Maximum Power Level:** This is the value of either the highest tier in the setting or the combination of all tiers that can stack together. Villains and important NPCs usually operate at this level, not caring for any lower tier.

BASE TIER

The base tier is where most of the story will happen. Usually this tier has a low power level, 1 to 6 or 7, and this is where heroes interact with each other in a semblance of normal life. This life is turned upside down when the presence of other tiers is revealed.

STARTING TIER

A variation of the base tier, this is a fraction of the setting's maximum power level, but the heroes climb slowly until they reach the top tier. While the setting's power level is much higher than the starting tier's, heroes are limited during character creation as if the starting tier was the setting's power level.

Progress can be gradual, with the Gamemaster handing out power points as she sees fit as an award to the heroes' accomplishments, or it can happen in big or small jumps, with the base level increasing between adventures. In the first case, the base tier increases by one power level for every 15 power points the GM awards to a single character. In the second, when the power level increases, the heroes gain 15 power points to use as they wish.

With a starting tier game, there are no additional or alternate tiers to switch to. Instead, the heroes slowly work towards reaching the top tier by raising their base tier's power level.

> ***Examples:*** *In the original Dragonball, the protagonists train hard to increase their martial arts, engaging in training sessions in order to meet the power level of the villains that enter the story at a higher power level than they are (and who unceremoniously beat them up in their first encounter).*

GEAR TIER

The heroes gain incredible new capabilities, thanks to items they can activate. The most typical example is the mecha genre, where otherwise normal people get to control weapons of mass destruction. A condition for the gear tier is that the heroes do *not* have ready access to the gear that increases their potential, but rather must wait for the right conditions in order to use it (receiving dispatch orders, the item powers up again, etc.). Also, some stories may be inappropriate for the higher tier, and thus there can be entire episodes where the heroes do not engage in the gear tier.

In a gear tier, the GM gives all characters a fixed number of power points according to how much higher the gear tier is to the base tier. These are spent on the Device power. Optionally, the GM can simply assign previously created devices to the players, as with stock model mecha or standard issue equipment.

As a rule of thumb, the gear tier's power level equals the power point cost of the most expensive Device, divided by 15, or the highest value between the Device's attack or Defense bonus, Toughness save, or skill rank or saving throw ranks +5.

Since gear adds to the heroes' abilities rather than replacing them, gear tiers stack with the heroes' existing tier.

Normal interaction and most of the story's plot happens in the base tier. Only when something very big happens does the focus switch to the gear tier. Heroes shift to the gear tier when activating their equipment or climbing into it. In the gear tier, heroes battle opponents that are similarly geared or whose own power level hovers around the gear tier's.

Examples: *In Vision of Escaflowne, the protagonists have access to their great mecha. However, they use them only when facing other mecha or entire armies. Otherwise, they fight their enemies on foot, relying on their swordsmanship, intuition, and courage to see things through.*

PARALLEL TIER

Some heroes lead double lives that go beyond a simple secret identity: they lead them in a different world. When they engage their abilities, they enter an entirely different reality that overlays, overlaps, or plainly replaces their normal one. Parallel tiers cover stories where the heroes have one set of abilities in one tier and a different one in another. The parallel tier is basically a second setting that heroes can access by virtue of who and what they are.

This works like the Morph power, only the alternate character is free as part of the different tier, and both tiers seldom interact, if ever. The parallel tier can certainly have a higher power level than the base tier, so heroes may be tempted to remain in a world where they are far more powerful than in their real, original home.

The parallel tier is still part of the story, and in order to be considered a tier, the heroes must be able to enter and leave the setting more or less at will.

Parallel tiers cover virtual worlds where heroes assume control of a persona with unique powers and different dimensions that the heroes can travel to and return (a story in the dimensional exiles genre still only has one tier, it's just that the heroes' backdrop changed), such as heroes who can perform astral travel and find a whole new world on the other side of the pillow.

Introducing a parallel tier is very easy, since players are not required to juggle new traits that add or replace their heroes'. They simply create another character to act as the hero's persona in the parallel tier. As such, this tier can be of any power level and work by different rules than the base tier.

Examples: *"The World" is the name of an online multiplayer game in the series .hack//SIGN, where warriors and sorcerers talk about computer specs and chatrooms. The series only shows the protagonists' in-game avatars, which have very different capabilities than their real-world selves (one of them is in a wheelchair, another has a different gender than the avatar, etc). The mysteries that unfold in The World have an impact on the real world, and the characters must use both their in-game and real skills and resources to solve them.*

POWER-UP TIER

The most obvious show of power tiers is when the characters, by virtue of an internal or external factor, can greatly increase their traits and even gain new ones. While Boost and the Battle Form power in **Chapter 2: Heroes** can simulate the power-up, a story that deals extensively with such abilities can require setting up a separate tier for the heroes' and villains' power-up forms.

As with a gear tier, a power-up tier should not come up very often and should have some restrictions to enter or leave. It also requires a rationale that explains why the heroes can play as regular people one day and as gods the next.

While this is the tier that has the most resemblance to superheroes and their secret identities, a power-up tier has the heroes somehow abandoning the base tier's concerns to interact with others in the power-up tier.

As an option, the power-up tier can be available as a certain emotional state that the heroes can attain, working in a richer form of the Rage feat and increasing their overall capabilities.

The best way to measure a power-up tier is to give players a number of ranks in the Boost or Battle Form powers, removing the Fades flaw and letting heroes stay in that tier for as long as they need to resolve an encounter. Every 3 ranks in Boost or Battle Form represents a power level, so if the Gamemaster doles out 9 ranks in the Battle Form power, the power-up tier is 3 power levels higher than the base tier.

A variant of this tier is the pet tier, where the heroes have creatures under their command that have a higher power level than they do. In this case, the pet tier exists alongside and separate from the base tier; heroes will face other characters of the same level, while their pets fight it out, their unleashed powers not crossing over to hurt the heroes except for some property damage.

Examples: *The Reapers in the Bleach manga and anime are capable of unleashing the power of their soulblades. The protagonist is a normal human with the ability to see ghosts but gains the ability to become a Reaper (first power-up tier). He later learns to access two further tiers when he learns the first level of power for his blade, and when it's time to save a dear friend from the Reapers' judgment, he learns a second one that makes him more powerful than before. When he becomes a Reaper, the difficulties of everyday life fade into the background as he has to fight lost souls, strange psychics, and even other Reapers, all of whom operate on the power-up tier.*

SHAPE TIER

This tier is simply a more physical version of a power-up tier. The hero gains in strength and ability by transforming into a more powerful shape. Most of these transformations are rather monstrous in manga and anime, but they can also represent the superhero genre.

For a shape tier, simply have the players create a different character, perhaps based on their base tier form, but not necessarily so. A shape tier is different than a parallel tier in that the heroes remain in their world when switching to their new persona, even if the transformation seems to take them to a new world overlapping their own.

Examples: *The silver-eyed witches of Claymore have been infused with demonic power called yoki, in order to destroy the demons that plague the world. They can release their yoki into their body to enhance their strength and gain new abilities. However, releasing too much yoki causes them to display demonic features, like gaping maws and claws. Going too far can turn them into demons proper, displaying a variety of nightmarish shapes. The protagonists and a close circle of friends are those who have gone too far but were somehow able to return with a deeper understanding of how to change their physiology with their yoki.*

CONFLICT AND CHALLENGES

Conflict drives any good story forward, and manga is not an exception. However, the multi-genre nature of manga introduces several types of conflict beyond combat. The normal rules of *Mutants & Mastermind* only handles these non-combat rules as a simple set of skill checks or saving throws, rather than the more elaborate and challenging system used for blasting things into oblivion.

If your series is not meant to feature combat prominently (or at all), such as in a school comedy or a horror investigation mystery, having a detailed combat system but a sketchy comic situation and investigation system can lead one player to blow power points during character creation in costly traits she'll barely get to use, while players with the foresight to spend their points on much cheaper traits that will be used extensively will have a clear advantage.

This section gives you a way to adapt the existing combat system of *Mutants & Masterminds* to represent types of conflict other than combat, so that when a situation is presented where the story can turn either way through the heroes' actions, you can make the experience as tense and exciting as combat.

CONFLICT BASICS

Every conflict situation in the game is composed of the following traits and elements:

OFFENSE BONUS

The main method by which a character imposes her will to win the conflict, the offense bonus is added to a die roll and compared to an opposing protection score to determine whether the character succeeds in enforcing her will upon the opposition. In the combat system, this is the attack bonus. It is possible to score a critical "hit" in an alternative conflict; this means a particularly devastating argument in social combat, a killer performance, a precise insight, or a surprising maneuver. The rules for critical hits apply normally to alternative conflicts.

PROTECTION SCORE

A character in conflict always acts against something that resists her will to win. The protection score represents this resistance and may belong to a person if the conflict happens between characters, a static hazard when the conflict is between a character and a physical thing, or to an abstract target when the conflict happens between a character and a situation. The protection score is equal to 10 + the protection bonus purchased or assigned to the target. Half of a protection score represents a "dodge" bonus normally, representing the hero's ability to avoid an offense; this bonus also goes away if the hero is caught unprepared. In the combat system, this is the Defense trait.

BULK

A participant's reach and scope in a conflict represents how well she can maneuver in the equivalent field of battle, but they also have an inherent influence on her offense and protection. A participant's bulk may change, depending on external circumstances. The GM may decide to simply assign participants a corresponding bulk, rather than letting players purchase it. In the combat system, this is a target's size and has the same modifiers to the offense and protection bonuses, even if size represents different things in different conflicts.

DRIVE

This collection of traits measures how strongly the character is able to impose her will to win the conflict. The drive's save DC is equal to 10 or 15 + character's drive bonus. In the combat system, this is an attack's damage bonus or save DC bonus. An attack that scores a critical hit increases the value of the drive being used by +5, as with any normal critical hit.

UNDER THE HOOD: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The core of any role-playing game is its conflict resolution system, the collection and interaction between traits and elements of chance that represent the characters' capabilities in defeating the challenges in a type of conflict. As a superhero action game, *Mutants & Mastermind*'s rules focus on violent confrontations between heroes and villains; in other words, combat. As such, the main type of conflict that the heroes will face will be battle, and the conflict resolution system is therefore the combat system.

Manga covers many genres that definitely include combat as a main method of conflict resolution, as evidenced by the previous chapters, but they also include stories where the most violent gesture is a slap to the face, and the conflicts that resolve plots are of a very different nature.

The options in this chapter give you the chance to switch the game's main conflict resolution system to deal with the conflicts that will actually feature in the story you want to play, so that when such situations arise, heroes will be just as involved in resolving such conflicts as fighters are in the combat system.

RESILIENCE SAVES

When a character successfully imposes her will against the target of a conflict, the target has a second line of defense in the way that he withstands that will. The target rolls a die and adds the applicable resilience save against the attacker's drive. In the combat system, this is the Toughness save bonus as well as the Fortitude, Reflex, and Will save bonuses.

ERODING CONDITIONS

When the target fails to withstand the character's will, his resilience is eroded so that he is driven closer to giving way to the character's victory. These conditions impose a penalty on the target's resilience and can temporarily impair or invalidate the target's very ability to exert his own will. In the combat system, these are the Injured, Bruised, Stunned, Staggered, and Disabled conditions.

DEFEATED CONDITION

Conditions accumulate until the character succeeds at imposing her will by driving the target towards defeat. A target that reaches a defeated condition can no longer resist the character's will, marking her victory. In the combat system, this is the Unconscious, Dying, or Dead conditions.

RECOVERY

The target may have a way to recover from the character's imposition of her will, given enough time or through self-induced or external actions. This makes the character lose some headway in the process of achieving victory by eliminating the target's eroding conditions. In the combat system, this represents healing and recovery checks.

TIME FRAME

A conflict is resolved in a given time and broken down in time units called "rounds," in which all participants take their "turns" to act in initiative order. Each turn allows for two actions of different types or one full action that takes the character's entire turn: a standard action that allows an active attempt to impose the will to win on any kind of activity and a move action that allows a character to perform activities that support her will but not impose her will directly. In the combat system, each action takes approximately 3 seconds, and actions happen somewhat simultaneously, to make a round last approximately 6 seconds, regardless of how many participants act. Actions are self-explanatory in their combat equivalents.

SPECIAL MANEUVERS AND CONDITIONS

A character can have more than one option to use in imposing her will to resolve a conflict. Depending on the conflict's nature, she can have special maneuvers available. Also, some direct offense actions may not impose eroding conditions but rather special conditions that hinder the target in different ways. In the combat system, special maneuvers include grappling, rushing, tripping, and knockback, and special conditions include entangled, nauseated, and shaken.

FEATS AND POWERS

A character can purchase feats and powers that bolster her conflict resolution traits as well as give her new options, like granting special maneuvers, the ability to impose special conditions, or new types of actions.

PURCHASING CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAITS

If you define a type of conflict other than combat as the series' main conflict resolution system, you can give players the option to purchase the new system's traits in the same way that they would have purchased traits like attack and Defense bonuses, saves, feats, and powers.

SCALING BACK COMBAT

Although a series can have a different conflict resolution system, the possibility of violence never disappears, and there *should* be a way to represent it.

ATTACK AND DEFENSE

These traits become skills with the normal costs and restrictions for skill ranks, separated into Melee Combat (Strength), Ranged Combat (Dexterity), and Combat Defense (Dexterity). Combat is conducted as opposed skill checks.

DAMAGE AND TOUGHNESS

Damage bonuses remain normal as per weapon, Strength, and power ranks, and they are still limited by power level. However, Toughness becomes a normal save that characters can purchase freely, with a limit of power level + 5.

DAMAGE CONDITIONS

Don't track damage. A character is "defeated" in combat when she loses a number of Toughness saves equal to her Constitution bonus, plus any Toughness bonus from armor or the Protection power. Whether she is unconscious or dying is up to the GM.

PARALLEL CONFLICTS

Rather than replace combat as your series' main conflict resolution system, you can simply use existing traits as conflict resolution traits. Each of the following conflict type examples give the option to have new conflict traits or give an existing trait that can double as one. This way, you can keep the focus on combat while adding more conflict options to your series, without sacrificing anything or rearranging things.

ALTERNATIVE CONFLICT TYPES

The following are different types of challenges and encounters that can serve as the main conflict resolution system in your series or as a parallel one to combat. Each lists a general description and a list of conflict traits it would use, plus some advice on options, complications, and implementations.

Each alternate conflict entry has the following definitions:

- *Concept and Situations:* Explains what the alternate conflict is about, who participates, and how, as well as what victory and defeat represent.
- *Abilities and Skills:* The combat system uses Strength (melee damage), Constitution (Toughness and Fortitude modifiers), and Dexterity (Initiative and Reflex modifiers). Alternate conflicts will use other abilities for equivalent roles (direct damage, Resilience and Fortitude, Initiative and Reflex, respectively). When the entry defines what abilities perform the functions of Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity in the conflict resolution system, use the bonuses for those abilities instead of the ones defined for combat. Likewise, some skills may play equivalent roles and should be used instead of their equivalents.
- *Damage:* This will explain what lethal and nonlethal damage means in the alternate conflict.
- *Drives:* This describes what is considered a "weapon" in the conflict, and how heroes can go about getting those things.
- *Time and Space:* This defines the conflict's equivalents to range (touched, ranged, perception, and extended range) as well as time units (the duration of an action and a round).
- *Traits Table:* This table lists what each type of trait is called in this conflict and what existing traits to use as per the parallel conflicts options explained previously. If a conflict type doesn't have a traits table, it uses the traits of another type of conflict, or its encounters are not handled normally.

CONFLICT TRAIT COSTS

TRAIT	COST (PER RANK)
Bulk	12 per category above Medium
	4 per category below Medium
Offense bonus	2 power points
Protection bonus	2 power points
Drive	varies by "attack" type
Resilience bonus	1 power point (may be restricted)
Feats and powers	Normal cost

SOCIAL COMBAT

Social encounters are complex and convoluted, and it's not always clear what the target of a social attack actually is. Social combat can even happen in absentia, with the opponents not being face to face at all, but rather targeting each other's good standing and name.

Social encounters happen whenever people interact with a purpose; that is, each party wants to obtain something from it. Sometimes, one of the participants is not a person but an institution, group of persons, an abstract idea, or a person's fame and reputation. The target's bulk represent this, starting at Medium (a single person with little fame) and increasing to Large (a small clique, the reputation of a local hero), Huge (the school's soccer team, the reputation of said team after winning the finals), Gargantuan (a national institution like the government or a big company, the image of a public person of national importance), Colossal (an international megacorporation, the fame of a beloved worldwide idol), or even Awesome (a global institution beloved by all, the legend of an ancient hero). Bulks smaller than Medium are reserved for groups or types that are generally despised or ignored (the Tiny bulk of a homeless crazy prophet makes her social influence nil but allows her to move below society's radar).

Friendly gatherings are not a social encounter, as they have no other purpose than to relax and have fun, and everyone wants the same. However, if two of the people in the gathering started competing for the attention of a third one, a potential for social combat occurs. Not everything needs to be a social combat encounter. Haggling over the price of a bag of rice is certainly

SOCIAL TRAITS

CONFLICT TRAIT	ORIGINAL TRAIT	ALTERNATIVE TRAIT
Offense	Expression	Any interaction skill
Protection	Grace	Sense Motive
Bulk	Group size or social standing	Reputation (if used)
Drive	varies	see text
Resilience	Cool	Will save

CONDITION	EQUIVALENT
Eroding Conditions	
"Bruised / Injured"	Unsettled / Upset
"Stunned"	Speechless
"Staggered / Disabled"	Bested / Humiliated
Defeated Condition (Unconscious / Dying / Dead)	Silenced / Disgraced / Shunned
Recovery check	Intelligence
Round Duration	1 minute or 1 day

a candidate for using social combat rules, but if it's hardly relevant to the story; a simple opposed interaction skill check will do.

ABILITIES AND SKILLS

In social combat, the most important abilities are Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, together with interaction and perception skills. Intelligence measures how well you understand what is happening and gives you a foundation for your arguments, and therefore it is equivalent to Constitution. Wisdom is your awareness of your surroundings as well as your intuition, which allows you to react to unexpected changes in a debate or situation; thus, it's equivalent to Dexterity. Finally, Charisma is the potency of your personality, which you can bring to bear to influence others, making it the equivalent of Strength.

Interaction skills are of the utmost importance in social encounters, allowing you to position yourself, perceive when you are being set up in a circular argument, or simply bear down on your target.

DAMAGE

In social combat, "lethal" damage represents malicious intent towards dealing actual harm to the target's social standing, presence, or any other truly negative consequence as a result of defeating him, such as wanting to cheat a merchant during haggling to deprive him of any profit or actually steal from him, or spreading vicious rumors about a target with the intent of discrediting for an ulterior purpose.

"Nonlethal" social damage is like harmless gossip and one-upmanship: you will probably shame your target or get the best of him during your encounter, but he will suffer little negative or long-term consequences from losing to you, such as winning a debate or brokering a negotiation between two unwilling parties so that they walk equally happy (or equally unhappy).

DRIVES

The main weapons of social combat are subtle and immaterial and are based on the skills that depend on the three mental abilities. For every 4 ranks a character has in such a skill, her social weapon has a +1 drive bonus. Vis-à-vis attacks (see below) always add the hero's Charisma bonus to her drive bonus. Intelligence-based skills represent reasoned arguments in the particular field being discussed, Wisdom-based skills are witty retorts or ingenious turns of phrase, and Charisma-based skills are direct attempts at influencing a target by charm, deception, or impressiveness. Particular "weapons" can be purchased with the Equipment feat normally, representing resources like favorite rhetorical tactics or seduction techniques, but they apply only in specific situations that the player must define when purchasing these "weapons." You can choose to use a purchased social weapon or a skill-derived social weapon at will, but they do not stack together.

TIME AND SPACE

Social combat can occur at *vis-à-vis* (to borrow another French word for close encounters…) or remote range. Vis-à-vis range is when all people participating in the encounter can interact with each other directly, even if their only connection is through a remote communications system. It sums touch, personal, and perception range. Social combat happens at remote range when one of the participants is not attacking her target directly, but attacking his reputation, standing, or other social quality that does not directly depends on the target's physical presence; this sums ranged and extended range. Remote range is normally only used against targets of Large bulk and larger.

A round in social combat is a fluid thing. In vis-à-vis, it normally is one minute, with actions taking around 30 seconds. All durations should move up the **Time and Value Progression** table accordingly. In remote combat, a round is an abstract thing that may take hours or days, depending on what is being done; assume a standard duration of one day.

PERFORMANCE TRAITS[1]

CONFLICT TRAIT	ORIGINAL TRAIT	ALTERNATIVE TRAIT
Offense	Performance / Reaction	Perform specialty skill / Will save
Protection	Confidence / Closed-mindedness	Perform specialty skill / Will save
Bulk	Audience size (audience-only)	Will save
Drive	Arts (see text) / Response	Perform specialty skill / Bluff
Resilience	Cool / Expectation	Will save / Will save

CONDITION	EQUIVALENT
Eroding Conditions	
"Bruised / Injured"	Nervous / Entertained
"Stunned"	Paralyzed / Impressed
"Staggered / Disabled"	Bummed / Ecstatic
Defeated Condition (Unc. /Dying /Dead)	Depressed / Hysterical
Recovery check	Wisdom / Intelligence
Round Duration	6 seconds

1 The first term refers to the performer's trait; the second refers to the audience's equivalent trait

PERFORMANCES

A public performance is all about impressing people. On one side, there is the performer, who makes use of talent and skill to produce a work of art in order to leave a mark upon an audience. This offshoot of the social encounter has a narrower focus and conditions and is basically a David vs. Goliath fight, only David has a bazooka.

A performance encounter is almost always initiated by the performer, usually the hero, who can also be a group representing a band, the cast of a play, etc. It does not need to be a formal performance of the artist-to-audience type, but rather it can be a more informal and impromptu affair, like a couple-to-gathering dance. When heroes engage in performance combat, their "enemy" becomes their audience, which has a bulk category depending on the number of people in it. A Medium audience has 50 members, and each size category larger moves this number four steps up the **Time and Value Progression Table**; each size category smaller moves the amount one step lower on the table.

A performance encounter is all about winning the audience over by amping up its excitement during the performance. In this case, there are no absolute terms of victory or defeat, but rather several degrees (see the damage section). Although traits have different names when applying to performer and audience, they are the same.

In a "battle of the bands" scenario, where two or more performers compete for the greater acceptance, they do not actually battle each other, rather "fighting" the audience, and whoever reaches the highest level of excitement, wins. This is, of course, not limited to music or formal performances. Two girls wanting to outdo each other during a traditional dance show become separate fighters facing the same audience.

It *is* possible that an outside agent will be acting against the group by mingling with the audience and making aid actions to support his rolls or using abilities on purpose to attack the group or keep the audience unimpressed.

ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Charisma is the most important trait during a performance encounter, as you project feeling and passion to your act through this ability and the skills related to it. In some cases, Dexterity and Constitution may come into effect, for more physical performance and extended shows, respectively.

The obvious skill that this conflict type depends on is the Perform specialty skill, although passionate oratory may call for Diplomacy, while a circus act will call for Athletics and Jump (and maybe Climb).

DAMAGE

Damage during a performance is a two-way track. On one side, the audience is getting more and more excited; on the other, the performer may lose her spirit little by little to a tough audience. There is no equivalent to the distinction of lethal and non-lethal damage. Instead, the more "damaged" the audience gets, the more excited it becomes, while the performer's damage measures her decreasing spirits and inspiration (and thus diminishing performance quality) in the face of a hostile audience.

DRIVES

A performer has her performing art to use as a weapon. For every 4 ranks a character has in the appropriate Perform skill, she has a +1 drive bonus, plus her Charisma bonus. The audience has a single drive, its Response, determined by its size and attitude (both assigned arbitrarily by the GM). The audience's base drive bonus is the same as its Intimidation modifier, as found on the **Size Table** in *Mutants & Masterminds*. Add +4 if the audience is hostile, +3 if it's unfriendly, +2 if it's indifferent, +1 if it's helpful, +0 if it's friendly, and –1 if it's fanatical. The audience also applies its Intimidation bonus to attacks.

Particular "weapons" can be purchased by the Equipment feat normally, representing resources like a trademark guitar-riff or a unique voice quality, which a performer can use once per set (see next) as a bonus to her normal drive bonus.

TIME AND SPACE

A whole encounter in a performance conflict is a "set," regardless of the type of performance. A set has a variable duration, depending on the art being performed. Musical pieces tend to last around 5 minutes, while the acts of a play last from 30 minutes to one hour. A set is then deconstructed into rounds that have the same duration as combat.

Performance conflict happens in an abstract space, as the performer acts within the confines of a stage (even if some works extend the stage towards the audience's seats), and the audience is a shapeless entity that can transcend space itself, as with televised performances, although only the "live" portion of the audience can attack back.

A performance round happens normally, with the members of the performing group or lone performer "attacking" the audience with their arts, and the audience attacking in return with its reaction to the performance. An encounter does not end until the sets end, even if either participants reach their defeated condition. Subtract the number of the performer's Nervous conditions from the audiences' Entertained conditions when comparing the quality of competing performers.

DREAMS AND SOULSCAPES

A dreamscape or soulscape is an alternate reality that happens in a different plane of existence. As the names suggest, they are the inner worlds of dreams and creatures' very souls. Although magic, psychic powers, and superscience are the main triggers for entering a dream, heroes can engage in dream and soul conflicts as part of the series' narrative development, representing through direct gameplay what is happening inside their hearts and minds.

This kind of combat also can represent two warring wills clashing invisibly, pushing at each other's sanity and resolve.

Whatever the method or justification for battling inside dreams or with souls, these types of conflict are basically the same as normal combat. Only the scenario changes, offering a few extra possibilities, as explained under each concept of dream and soul combat.

Dream combatants can be either guests or hosts. A guest is one who is fighting in a dreamscape not of her own making, either because she is in a parallel spiritual dimension or because she is invading someone else's dreams or soul. A host is one whose dreams or soul are being invaded. Guests can exert some influence on the dreamscape around them, but within limits; hosts are masters of their own dreams and souls, with absolute control of what happens in them if they have the discipline to shape them.

DREAM AND SOUL TRAITS

CONFLICT TRAIT	ORIGINAL TRAIT	ALTERNATIVE TRAIT
Offense	Project	Applicable skill check
Protection	Spirit	Will save
Bulk	N/A	N/A
Drive	Inspirations	Applicable skill check
Resilience	Adaptability	Will save

CONDITION	EQUIVALENT
Eroding Conditions	
"Bruised / Injured"	Altered / Damaged
"Stunned"	Stunned
"Staggered / Disabled"	Suggestible / Numbed
Defeated Condition (Unconscious / Dying /Dead)	Wakeful / Unfeeling / Soulless
Recovery check	Wisdom
Round Duration	Abstract

A dream or soul battle happens when opponents meet in a spiritual dimension for any reason. It can be one trying to invade the dreams of another, two astral travelers stumbling upon each other, or even two martial artists simply staring at each other and letting their spiritual strength express itself in an invisible battle of wills.

Defeat in dream or soul combat is a serious thing; it means that the victor can impose her will upon the defeated. A victorious guest can change the tenure of a dream into a nightmare or truly damage the soul of her victim. A victorious host can trap the would-be invader in her own nightmare world or simply expel her.

ABILITIES AND SKILLS

As with social combat, dream combat is a matter of spiritual fortitude rather than brawn. Intelligence represents the variety of mental or spiritual images you can bring to bear, and therefore it's equivalent to Dexterity. Wisdom is the intuition that helps you withstand nightmarish things, and thus it is equivalent to Constitution. Finally, Charisma represents how you can influence others, making it the equivalent of Strength.

Creative skills work best when in dreams and souls, for they provide the dreamers with weapons and options to affect the surroundings. If a story will be all about shaping and fighting in dreams and souls, it might be possible to create new Craft and Knowledge specialties for "dreamcrafting."

All the powers you have in the waking world translate to dreams, as they are part of you. However, you can have extra powers in dreams by purchasing them with the Power Loss drawback (may only use when dreaming or against souls; uncommon, major, –3 points).

Guests are limited to the powers and drives they take with them, but hosts have almost unlimited power inside their own dreams and souls. A host can make a Concentration check as a free action, against a DC equal to the setting's power level; success means that he can use the benefits of extra effort without suffering any fatigue. A Concentration check with a DC equal to the setting's power level +5 allows the host to simulate any power with a number of ranks equal to half his Concentration ranks for a single use.

DAMAGE

Non-lethal damage in dream and soul combat has one objective: change. Each Altered condition that a combatant inflicts on an opponent means



that she has changed a small detail in the dreamscape or soulscape, perhaps the sky color or the general background. This also happens when both opponents are guests. Lethal damage, on the other part, does not particularly change anything, but it's a devastating wound on the target's psyche, a truly crippling injury aimed at destroying the target's soul. A particular kind of story may rule that only non-lethal damage is possible for dream and soul battles, with lethal damage reserved to the foulest powers.

Altered and Damaged conditions do not persist into physical reality. Combatants recover from them when they wake up or abandon the spiritual stage of the battle. More serious conditions have different effects:

- *Suggestible*: A target driven to this condition is amenable to any suggestion that the attacker can make at the end of the battle, implanting an idea, a course of action, a way of thought, etc. This suggestion is always the culmination of the changes the attacker performed. It can represent simply that the target's mind was pried open during dream combat and sensitive information was revealed.
- *Numbed*: A target whose soul has been damaged to this extent lacks empathy and has difficulty expressing or even understanding emotion. A Numbed character suffers a –4 penalty on all interaction skills, although he gains a +2 bonus to Will saves against mental effects that happen in the waking world (going into another dream battle while Numbed means automatic defeat).
- *Wakeful:* The target is forced awake. In addition to being Suggestible, he also becomes fatigued, as if he hadn't slept or had undergone strenuous activity.
- *Unfeeling:* The target's soul has been damaged in such a way that he has no access to his feelings and personality. The attacker can rewrite the victim's personality when it reaches this state. Also, the character automatically loses any opposed interaction skill check, but he is immune to mental effects that happen in the waking world.
- *Soulless:* The character no longer has a soul. He is a living construct that retains all his memories, but he feels no emotional connection to them, as if he were just a spectator. All moral and ethical allegiances are lost, as well as any complications connected to emotional ties.

A host automatically has an equivalent spiritual regeneration power. He can make a recovery check each round as a standard action, mending for free any changes the guest performed.

DRIVES

The weapons of mental and soul combat are based on deep or instinctual understanding of the inner self. Since reality is malleable, a combatant's drives change constantly. They may not even look like weapons, but rather like more ephemeral things such as well-timed insults, insightful conclusions, self-confidence, or faith. Depending on the tactic a hero is attempting, the GM asks for a skill check; the skill can be an interaction skill or a Craft, Knowledge, or Perform skill, as well as the Sense Motive skill. For every 2 points by which the check result exceeds the target's Spirit, the damage the hero's attack deals is +1, plus her Charisma bonus. A hero can stick with the drive she rolled or attempt a new approach with the same or a different skill, rolling again to "create" a new weapon.

The only other "weapons" a hero can have when fighting inside dreams or souls are the powers she can use inside a dreamscape or soulscape.

TIME AND SPACE

Time and space are completely abstract in this type of conflict. While the conflict develops using dimensions and durations of physical reality, once combat is over, the GM may declare that it all happened in the literal blink of an eye, an entire night, or even a few days.

MASS COMBAT

Mass combat is an uncommon conflict resolution system. Few comic heroes ever get to command whole armies against other whole armies, since they basically have the punch of an entire unit in their own hands. However, some manga stories deal with the complexity of mass combat, like the commanding officers of the Gundam saga, or Griffin, the genius strategist from *Berserk*.

In mass combat, a commander is pitted against another commander using their troops as their weapons, directing their movements and the way they fight to make use of every possible tactical advantage.

Mass combat is really no different from normal combat, except that in this case, a combatant is a unit of combatants of roughly the same power level created through the Minions feat, all bunched up together as a single "being" that behaves roughly like a minion horde (see **Chapter 5: Pets**). Its bulk doesn't represent its size, but rather the number of individual combatants in the unit.

A unit is created like any normal minion, increasing the numbers through ranks devoted to that end. A single minion is a Diminutive mass combat unit, if the minion is of Medium size. Reduce the size of the unit by one size category for every size category that the minion is smaller than Medium. Now, for every Minion rank devoted to increasing the unit's numbers, increase its unit size category by one (thus, a 2-man team is a Tiny unit, a 5-man squad is a Small unit, a 10-man force is a Medium unit, and a 25-man platoon is a Large unit). Note that the unit's size modifiers only apply to mass combat, not individual combat if the minions go against a single opponent instead of against another unit. Apply all size modifiers to the base minion trait to calculate the unit's actual traits.

A rank in the Minions feat can have an additional effect for mass combat: it provides the unit with a commanding officer. A commanding officer remains a minion, but he is trained to receive the commander's orders and communicate them effectively to all other minions in the unit.

Heroes that are part of a unit do not count towards its mass combat traits, and they act independently. They are, after all, heroes, not faceless minions. A hero in a unit counts as a commanding officer.

The conditions of victory and defeat are the same as with individual combat; annihilate the opponent, force him to surrender, or push him to flee, and you win.

MASS COMBAT

DC	EFFECT
5	Change a unit's direction and speed up to the unit's maximum speed (includes ordering a unit to stop)
5	Order the unit to attack or stop attacking a specific target or area
10	Order the unit to perform a special combat action (charge, slam, defensive or aggressive stance, etc.)
10	Use the benefits of the Leadership feat on a whole unit.
15	Grant the unit a +1 to attack rolls, damage bonus, or Defense for a single round. For every 5 points by which the check exceeds the DC, the bonus increases by +1.
15	Increase the unit's speed by 10 ft. For every 5 points by which the check exceeds the DC, speed increases by an additional 10 ft.
15	Cause a unit to scatter, effectively "disappearing" from the battlefield as if having Insubstantial 4.
15	Order a scattered or routed unit to regroup on any point of the battlefield.
15	Order a unit to care for its wounded. As a full action, the unit stands its ground and recovers from a single Injured condition.
15	Promote any member of a unit to commanding officer, if the unit has previously lost its commanding officer due to a critical hit.
+5	Any of the above orders given to multiple units with different parameters (different movement routes for a pincer attack, attacking different targets, etc.), provided that the units have a commanding officer.
Opposed	Engage in an opposed check against the unit's commanding officer or commander to impose a penalty to attack, damage, Defense, or speed to a single enemy unit for a single round. The penalty is –1 or –10 ft., with an additional –1 or –10 ft. for every 5 points by which your roll exceeds your opponent's. The target unit must be within range of any of your own units.

ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Since all minions inside a unit are made alike, the base traits for the base minion count as the traits of the entire unit. A commander, however, needs the Knowledge (tactics) skill to move his units properly. A commander can take a move action to make a Knowledge (tactics) check, and if he can communicate with a unit or a unit's commanding officer, he can achieve the following effects by meeting or exceeding one of the following DCs.

DAMAGE

Damage types in mass combat are unchanged, even if it's rare that a unit in open warfare will choose or be ordered to deal non-lethal damage.

Damage dealt to a unit is spread around all its members, although the unit as a whole has its own damage track. When a unit accumulates four Injured conditions, the attacker has the choice of letting the conditions remain or reducing the unit's size by one category, at which point those Injured conditions disappear, turned into permanent casualties. A unit that is Staggered or Disabled can make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage bonus of the attack that caused the condition); success means that the unit can rout, dispersing and effectively taking itself out of the battle, although a commander can order it to regroup.

A critical strike by a unit or hero against a unit does not take it out, as per the normal minion rules. It applies as normal, or the attacker can choose to take out the unit's commanding officer.

DRIVES

The base minion defines what attacks are available to the unit.

TIME AND SPACE

This is the same as individual combat, just on a grander scale.

ANTAGONISTS

As colorful as manga heroes can be, their antagonists can be even more so. A prominent feature of manga villains is that often they aren't evil, or even villains at all, just people who oppose the heroes with very valid reasons. Of course, there are the madmen and incomprehensible *things* forcing heroes to step up and fight the good fight, but a good manga villain is one who you can empathize with if given the chance to explain herself.

In addition to the antagonist archetypes described here, *all* of the hero archetypes in previous chapters can be made into a villain, from rival pet trainers and enemy mecha aces to evil power-hungry psychics and tyrannical martial artist conquerors.

THE DARK SWORDSMAN

With a mysterious past, an uncertain present, and unknown allegiance, the Dark Swordsman is an enigma for both heroes and villains alike. While not cruel or actively evil, his amorality and lack of respect for those not as skilled carry him through dark and thorny paths. Most of his techniques are considered evil and forbidden by many other masters, and he probably sacrificed much to learn them, up to and including his own humanity. He cares nothing for causes and ideals; there is only the way of the sword. He will follow its tenets with ruthless honor and merciless zeal.

THE EXILED DEMON

Cast away from both the heavens and the pits of hell, the Exiled Demon revels in the misery that he can cause and the havoc he can unleash. He has the loose mission to corrupt a number of souls before he's allowed back to hell, but he has no compunctions about stalling his return, as he's enjoying his time on Earth. He will be aware if any exiled deity arrives at his location, and he will go out of his way to make her life miserable just for the fun of it. In short, a demon will be true to his mandate to be nasty, if for no other reason than to embody the forces of evil in his city.

THE INVADER ENTITY

With a monstrous shape and unfathomable intentions, an Invader Entity arrives to sow chaos in its wake and plant the seeds for a much larger incursion. Its immunity to regular weapons demands that heroes take up the challenge to stop it, being particularly vulnerable to their powers or their mecha's weapons. Invader Entities come in many shapes and sizes, but the first one the heroes will be facing is just a promise of things to come, because its mindless tenacity only heralds the sinister intents of its superiors.

THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE

The vast world of worldwide computer networks can develop a fauna of its own, and some of its products become predators. The Ghost in the Machine is a program that developed sentience by collecting data in an infinite loop. Now, it observes the activities of the humans with detached interest. While it may be idealistic and wish for a better world, its idea of "better" can be incompatible with life as we know it. In an advanced age where the borders between computers and the human mind blur, the Ghost in the Machine emerges as the god of a new millennium, able to hack into people's very souls and make them into puppets, while its existence as pure information makes it impossible for the heroes to find it and confront it directly.

THE JEALOUS SCHOOLGIRL

She's rich, pretty, smart, and talented… only she's not as pretty, smart, and talented as *you*, which makes her burn inside with unbridled envy. A mistress of manipulation, she's the undisputed gossip queen at school, competing with you for the spot as the most popular student. If she's attracted to you, she'll want to gain your affection so she can display you as a trophy. If she's not, she'll make sure your school life is a living hell until you properly and publicly display your submission to her superiority.

THE KAIJU

Tokyo is a city that's prone to destruction, and no other monster has it in for it like a kaiju. Born from radioactive contamination, magic, alien meddling, or a dead end of evolution, the kaiju invariable arrives at civilization with no regard for the puny things that stand in its way. Kaiju appear mostly out of happenstance, but sometimes they are freed by an evil character that wants to use the giant monster as a directed force of nature, because that is basically what a kaiju is.

THE MEGACORP CEO & HENCHMAN

He may not have mystical powers or any combat ability whatsoever, but he has one of the most powerful transnational companies in his bag, with all the resources that this entails. The Megacorp CEO is a ruthless businessman who sees people as pawns in his power games and tools in the advancement of his plans. He's usually the founder of the company and may have started it with a very different goal than his current one; it's just that power corrupts, and the absolute power of financial mastery has absolutely corrupted him. He has intimate and deep knowledge of what makes the heroes tick and hundreds of minions and creations to make the best of that knowledge.

Of course, no person of importance can do without a trusted aide, someone who can get the dirty work done with loyalty and professionalism in a fish tank that's full of piranha. The Henchman has been working for the CEO for several years now, probably all his (or her) life. With superb training, the Henchman plays a good role as secretary, personal assistant, bodyguard, and hitman. While in most cases the Henchman serves with unswerving loyalty, there are cases where it's only a ruse, and the Henchman is just waiting for the right time to off the CEO and take his place.

ANTAGONIST CONCEPTS

Just like there are concepts that repeat for heroic characters, antagonists also have a few models and stereotypes in manga that they can follow.

THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL ENEMY

You are sure that, if things were different, you and the heroes could have been friends. Unfortunately, fate has placed you on the other side of whatever conflict pits you against each other, and you believe in your cause as much as they believe in theirs. You will regret killing them, and you will honor their deaths as worthy adversaries.

THE COERCED ANTAGONIST

You know that what you're doing is wrong, but you have no choice in the matter. If you don't follow the evil plans you've been given, something terrible will happen, and it's not as if you expect the heroes to understand. In their eyes, you're just another flunky to defeat, but you'll certainly sell your life at a very dear price.

THE CRAZED CRUSADER

You were placed on this world for a reason, with a mission to save the world—or destroy it. The heroes are just a bump on your road to salvation or are actually the target of your crusade. Nothing matters besides fulfilling your sacred mission, and there is no such thing as an innocent bystander.

THE GOOD MANIPULATOR

You have come to the realization that people are better motivated by hate than altruism. You need the heroes to accomplish a mission for the greater good, and the fastest way to do it is if they consider you their enemy and want to thwart "your" goals. Lying to them about the nature of the threat is acceptable, as long as they accomplish what you chose them to do. Let the heroes consider you the bad guy, if it ultimately serves a greater good.

THE ETERNAL RIVAL

Since you were a child, you have seen one of the heroes as your nemesis. You have lived your life with the purpose of besting your nemesis in whatever field you can, dogging her steps to make sure that your exploits are known. At some point, you lost perspective of things, and now, you don't care what you do, as long as you can defeat your hated enemy.

THE EVIL MASTERMIND

You have a plan, and it has taken you a lot of time to gather the resources and reach a position that will allow you to make your dreams come true. You have the charisma and the expertise to manage minions, followers, employees, or even people who think you are their friend, but in the end, they are all just a means to your end.

THE POSSESSED

You have no idea what you're doing. One day you just opened your eyes to find yourself as a passenger in your own body… a body that you chose well, if only the previous owner's voice were a little quieter…

THE RELUCTANT VILLAIN

You really don't want to hurt the heroes, but they keep forcing your hand by interfering with your plans. You have tried countless times to explain your reasoning and convince them that what you're doing is the right thing to do, but whomever put them up to opposing you has them pretty well brainwashed, leaving you no choice but to defend your ideals. You would prefer that the heroes see the light and join you, but if they refuse, then they must be eliminated.

THE SPURNED FRIEND

You thought you were friends. You thought they liked you and understood you, you opened your heart to them… They turned out to be just like everybody else, and now you will not rest until you see the heroes' lives turned to ashes around them.

THE TWO-FACED ALLY

You are only pretending to be the heroes' friend. You can be charming and amiable, and it doesn't hurt to help them along, especially if such help comes with hidden strings attached or ultimately benefits you. You are just biding your time until you reveal your true nature.

DARK SWORDSMAN — POWER LEVEL 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+3	+2	+1	+1	+0
16	16	15	12	13	10

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+6/+2*	+12	+15	+9

*flat-footed, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+15), Climb 7 (+10), Concentration 10 (+11), Intimidate 15 (+15), Medicine 6 (+7), Notice 8 (+9), Sense Motive 6 (+7)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Assessment, Attack Focus 2 (melee), Attack Specialization (katana), Break the Style[1], Critical Strike, Defensive Roll 4, Elusive Target, Equipment 2, Evasion 2, Favored Opponent (humans), Follow-Up Attack[1], Improved Block, Improved Critical (katana), Instant Up, Move-by Action, Passing Attack[1], Quick Draw, Sneak Attack 2, Startle

Equipment: Hell-forged katana (masterfully crafted sword; damage +3 (or +5 used in both hands), Critical 19-20, Slashing damage, no range increment, Medium, Toughness 12, 8 equipment points), rain-proof straw hat and traveling clothes, backpack.

POWERS

Blade of Hell Stance[1] **7** (Improved Defense, Improved Initiative +2, Takedown Attack, Uncanny Dodge 2 (chi, hearing); Weapon-Dependent [sword]; **Blast 10** [wind slash created by a sword swing, slashing damage], **Chi Sense**[1] **3** [innate chi sense], **Shield 5** [sword moves so fast it can't be seen to block attacks; Subtle])

Flash Step[1] **1**

Trip 6 (Burst Area, Knockback; Touch Range)

Combat: Attack +6 (melee), +4 (ranged), +8 (katana), +9 (Hell-forged katana), Grapple +9, Damage +3 (unarmed), +6 (hell-forged katana), +8 (hell-forged katana wielded with two hands), Defense +8 (+3 when out of the Blade of Hell Stance), Knockback –3, Initiative +11 (+3 when out of the Blade of Hell Stance).

Abilities 22 + Skills 16 (64 ranks) + Feats 27 + Powers 43 + Combat 14 + Saves 30 = 152

"YOU LACK THE SPIRIT TO MASTER MY TECHNIQUE."



EXILED DEMON — POWER LEVEL 15

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+3	+4	+4	+6
13	16	16	18	19	22

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+3	+17	+16	+19

[1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Bluff 18 (+24), Concentration 13 (+17), Diplomacy 16 (+22), Disguise 10 (+16), Gather Information 11 (+17), Intimidate 12 (+18), Knowledge (arcane lore) 15 (+19), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 13 (+17), Notice 14 (+18), Sense Motive 18 (+22)

Feats: Attack Focus 5 (ranged), Attack Specialization 2 (magic), Attractive 2, Distract 2 (Bluff and Intimidate), Fake Expert[1], Fascinate (Bluff), Fearless, Ritualist

POWERS

Emotion Control 12 (Mind Blank)
Illusion 10 (visual and auditory; Phantasm; Progression 2)
Magic 15 (Mystic Blast; choose 5 more alternate powers)
Morph 3 (any form of the same mass)

Combat: Attack +2 (melee), +7 (ranged), +11 (magic), Grapple +3, Damage +1 (unarmed) +15 (mystic blast), Defense +12 (+6 flat-footed), Knockback –1, Initiative +3

Drawbacks: Vulnerable (holy magic DC x1.5, moderate, uncommon, –2), Weakness (–1 to all checks, attack rolls and Defense in the presence of innocence; each minute, –3)

Abilities 44 + Skills 35 (140 ranks) + Feats 15 + Powers 91 + Combat 28 + Saves 42 – Drawbacks 5 = 250

"JUST WAIT 'TIL THEY'RE DISTRACTED AND BAM! BWAHAHA!"



INVADER ENTITY POWER LEVEL 17

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+12	-2	+6	-	-1	-2
34	6	22	-	8	6

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+18	+18	+10	IMMUNE

[1] Trait described in this book

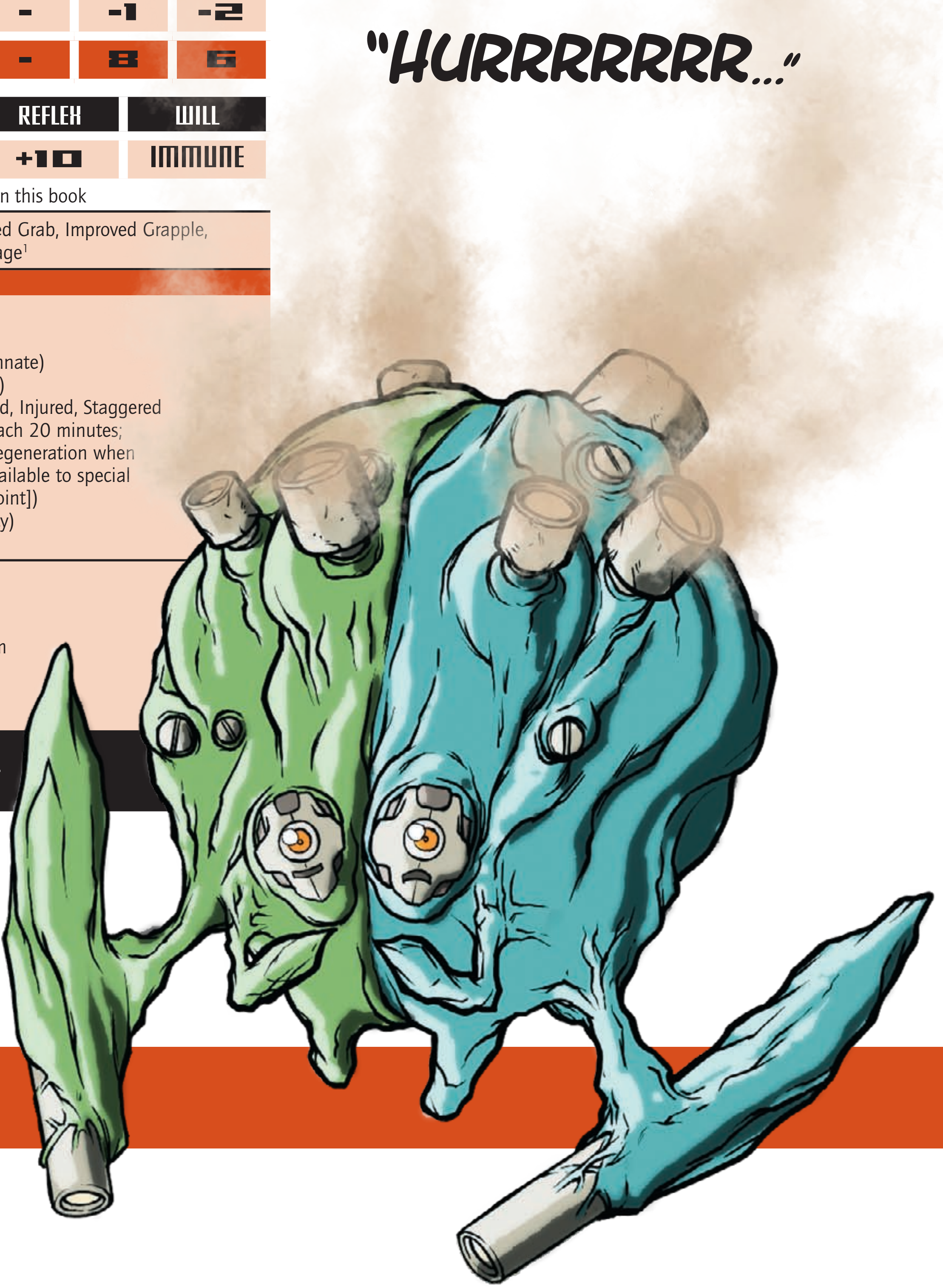
Feats: Attack Focus 8 (melee), Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Takedown Attack 2, Withstand Damage[1]

POWERS

Flight 2
Force Field 12 (Impervious)
Growth 12 (Continuous; Permanent; Innate)
Immunity 20 (lethal physical damage)
Regeneration 13 (recover from Bruised, Injured, Staggered each round, recover from Disabled each 20 minutes; Regrowth; Power Loss [cannot use Regeneration when attacked by a special energy type available to special mecha only, uncommon, minor, –1 point])
Strike 6 (diamond-tipped claws, Mighty)
Super-Strength 4 (Shockwave),

Combat: Attack +16 (melee, includes modifiers from Growth), +8 (ranged, includes modifiers from Growth), Grapple +44 (includes modifiers from Growth), Damage +12 (unarmed), +18 (Strike), Defense +0, Knockback -27, Initiative -2

Abilities -20 + Skills 0 (0 ranks) + Feats 13 + Powers 113 + Combat 32 + Saves 24 = 162



GHOST IN THE MACHINE — POWER LEVEL 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-	-	-	+8	+5	+2
-	-	-	26	20	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+0	+0	+0	+15

[1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Computers 15 (+23), Diplomacy 10 (+12), Knowledge (45 ranks to distribute as desired), Notice 15 (+20), Search 15 (+23)

Feats: Assessment, Attack Focus 10 (ranged), Contacts, Eidetic Memory, Inventor, Online Research[1], Redirect, Second Chance (Computers check when accessing a computer system), Skill Mastery (Computers, one Knowledge, Notice and Search), Well-Informed

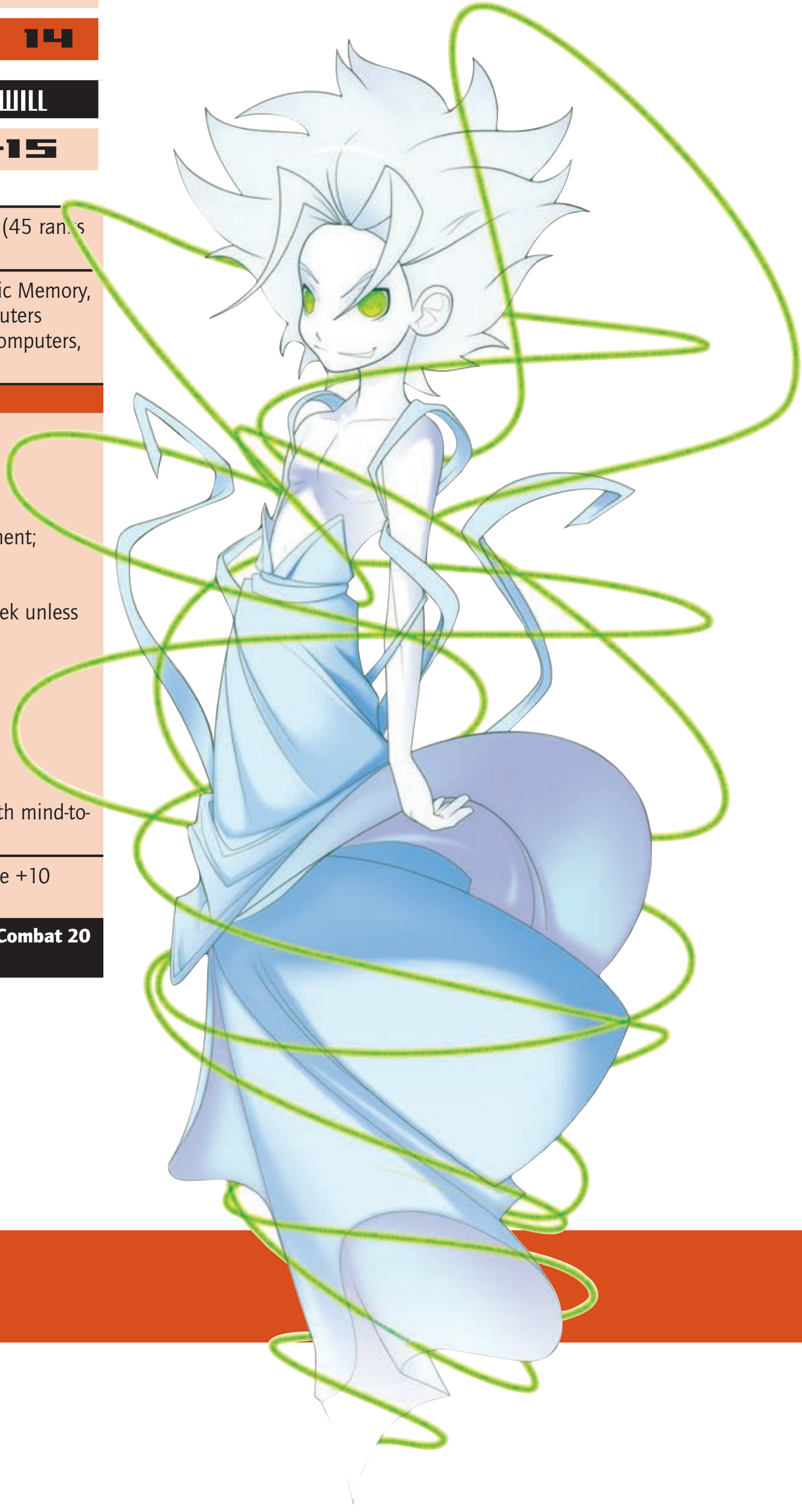
POWERS

Blast 10 (electrical; Affects Corporeal)
Datalink 9 (Machine Control)
Flight 1
Immunity 11 (aging, sleep and life support)
Insubstantial 4 (affected by electromagnetic pulses; Permanent; Innate)
Morph 3 (any form)
Regeneration 15 (recovery bonus +9, resurrection in one week unless killed with electromagnetic energy)
Super-Movement 1 (dimensional movement to cyberspace)
Super-Senses 9 (accurate and acute radio, acute internet communications)
Teleport 10 (Limited [cannot transport any extra mass, including unwilling targets], Medium [electronic communications devices])
Transform 10 (Mental, whole mind; Limited [only targets with mind-to-hardware cybernetic implants]),

Combat: Attack +5 (melee), +15 (ranged), Grapple –, Damage +10 (blast), Defense +5, Knockback –, Initiative +0

Abilities 0 + Skills 25 (100 ranks) + Feats 19 + Powers 125 + Combat 20 + Saves 10 = 199

"YOU WILL UNDERSTAND EVENTUALLY, ONCE WE ARE ALL ONE."



JEALOUS SCHOOLGIRL — POWER LEVEL 5

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+1	+0	+2	+1	+4
8	12	10	15	12	18

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+0	+4/+8*	+2/+5*	+6/+9*

*With the Bishoujo[1] feat, [1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Bluff 11 (+15), Diplomacy 6 (+10), Gather Information 10 (+14), Intimidate 8 (+12), Knowledge (popular culture) 6 (+8), Knowledge (streetwise) 3 (+5), Notice 8 (+9), Sense Motive 8 (+9)

Feats: Assessment, Attractive, Benefit 4 (rich heiress, can get any temporary item worth under 20 equipment points with the Connected feat), Bishoujo[1] 4 (all saves), Connected, Contacts, Distract 2 (Bluff and Intimidate), Inspire 3, Leadership, Luck 3, Master Plan, Minions (3 School Kids[1] from the Supporting Cast section, each with the Power Proxy[1] feat), Slap Silly[1] 5

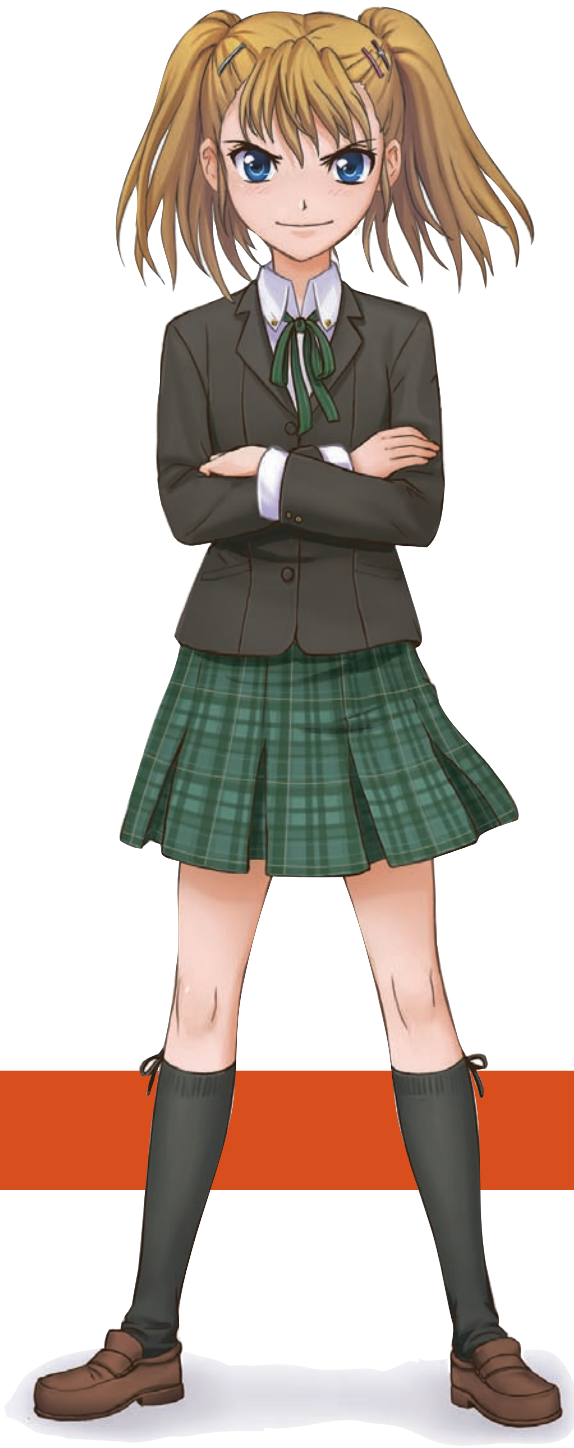
POWERS

Curse of Shame[1] **6** (–4 to Charisma to chosen target, 3 points)

Combat: Attack +2, Grapple +1, Damage –1, Defense +3, Knockback -0, Initiative +1

Abilities 15 + Skills 15 (60 ranks) + Feats 30 + Powers 18 + Combat 10 + Saves 10 = 98

"WE'LL JUST SEE WHO HE ENDS UP TAKING TO THE DANCE..."



KAIJU — POWER LEVEL 15

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+16	-3	+12	-4	+3	-2
42	4	34	3	16	6

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+15	+20	+3	+5

* Includes Growth modifiers

Skills: Acrobatics 15 (+12), Climb 20 (+20), Escape Artist 12 (+9), Intimidate 15 (+21), Notice 14 (+17)

Feats: Favored Environment 1, Fearsome Presence 10, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Rage 2, Takedown Attack, Throwing Mastery

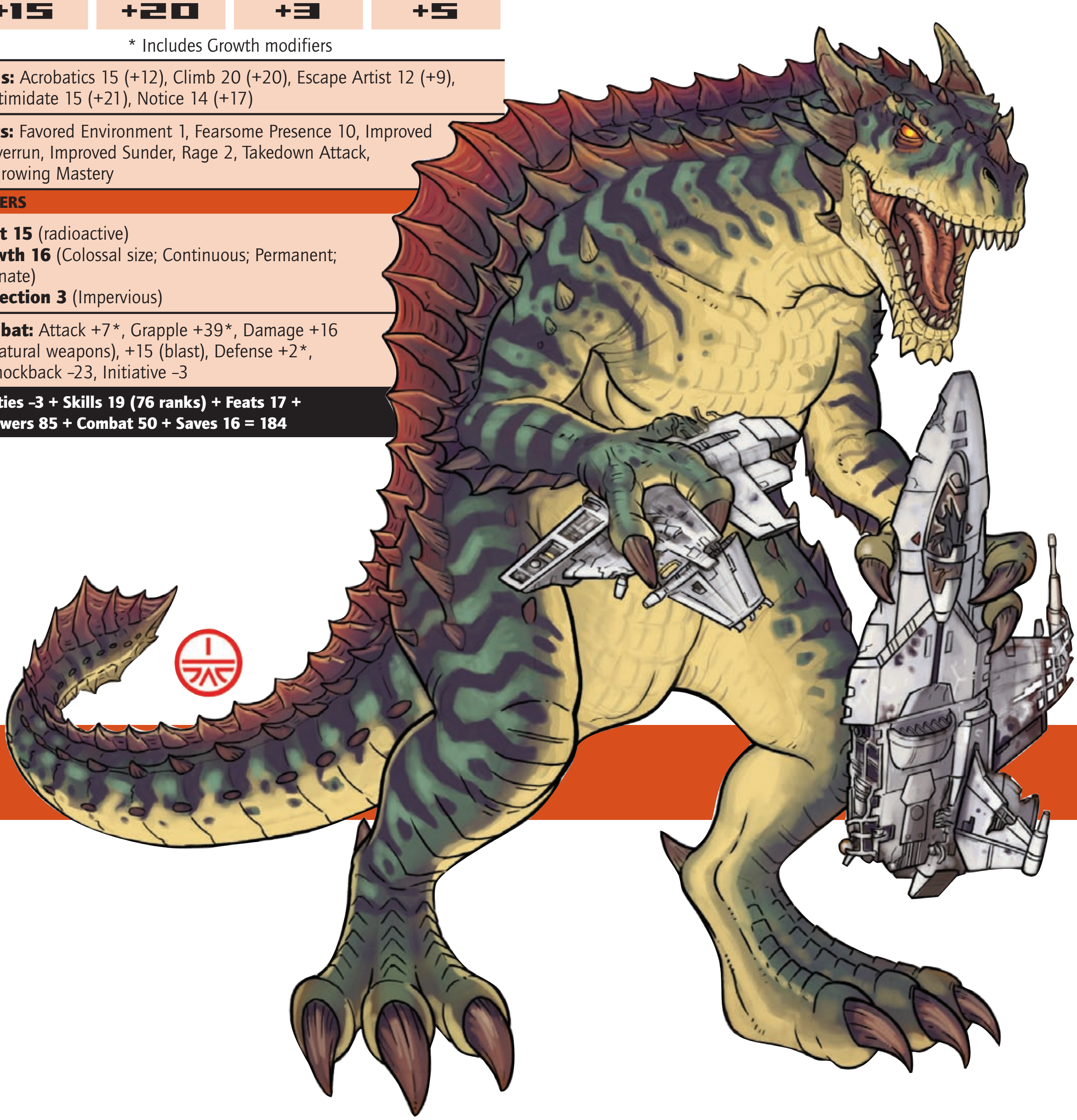
POWERS

Blast 15 (radioactive)
Growth 16 (Colossal size; Continuous; Permanent; Innate)
Protection 3 (Impervious)

Combat: Attack +7*, Grapple +39*, Damage +16 (natural weapons), +15 (blast), Defense +2*, Knockback -23, Initiative -3

Abilities -3 + Skills 19 (76 ranks) + Feats 17 + Powers 85 + Combat 50 + Saves 16 = 184

"RAAAWWRR!!!..."



MEGACORP CEO — POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+0	+1	+4	+3	+2
10	10	12	18	17	15

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+1	+9	+6	+13

[1] Trait described in this book

Skills: Bluff 13 (+15), Computers 13 (+17), Diplomacy 13 (+15), Gather Information 10 (+12), Intimidate 8 (+10), Knowledge (13 ranks in primary business skill, 10 ranks in each of two complementary skills, 7 ranks in tertiary skill), Notice 8 (+11), Search 6 (+10), Sense Motive 13 (+16)

Feats: Assessment, Attack Focus 4 (ranged), Benefit (millionaire; has access to up to 40 points of equipment in any combination, including replacing any item with any other at any time), Dodge Focus 2, Equipment 2, Improved Critical (pistol), Leadership, Redirect, Rousing Speech[1] (Diplomacy), Seize Initiative, Set-Up, Sidekick 24 (henchman: use the Troubleshooter archetype in **Chapter 2: Heroes**), Sneak Attack 2, Truth Sense[1]

Equipment: Cellular phone, expensive suit, light pistol (+3 damage), PDA

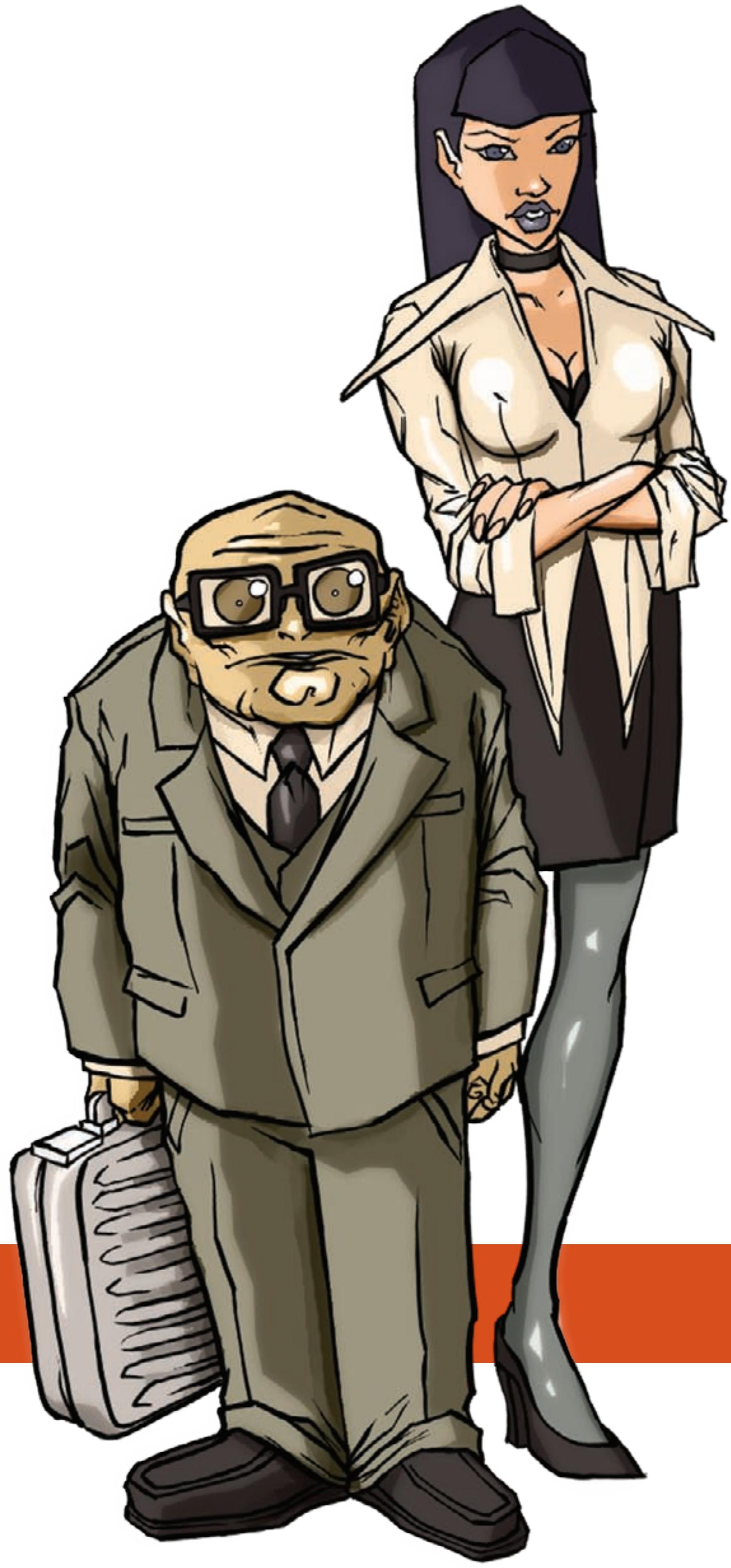
POWERS

Summon Security 3 (security guards that use the Police Officer supporting character archetype in page 228 of *Mutants & Masterminds*, each minion has 10 extra, unassigned power points; Horde; Progression 5, Sacrifice; Delayed response [summoned security guards arrive in one minute, –2 points])

Combat: Attack +3 (melee), +7 (ranged), Grapple +3, Damage +0 (unarmed), +3 (pistol), Defense +6 (+2 flat-footed), Knockback –0, Initiative +0

Abilities 22 + Skills 31 (124 ranks) + Feats 43 + Powers 13 + Combat 14 + Saves 24 = 147

"THERE IS NOTHING PERSONAL ABOUT THIS. IT'S JUST *BUSINESS.*"



SUPPORTING CAST

Since manga heroes are deeply embedded in the world they live in, their supporting cast can take greater importance. They can be friends, family, minions, or maybe comrades, as well as small-time thugs and villainous extras. In addition, a supporting cast member can become an integral part of the plot, especially if she finds her way onto the heroes' relationship map.

Most of the supporting cast templates found in *Mutants & Masterminds* (**Chapter 11: Friends &** Foes, page 226) can appear in a manga series, regardless of genre. Simply switch equipment and roles for their equivalent in the setting. The following are a few extra cast members that tend to appear in support of manga heroes.

AGENT 5

In Japanese, the number 5 is pronounced "go," as in "go fetch this." This character is, as implied by the poor pun, a gopher who can fence stolen goods for the heroes or get a hard to find item they need.

CLASS REP

Above any average student, the class representative was elected to lead the class and act as liaison between the teacher and the students. Some take their jobs too seriously, and others are so charismatic that they are chosen naturally. Whatever the case, a class rep will generally assume it's her responsibility to mind any heroic classmate's business.

COMMANDER

A step above mere soldiers and warriors, a commander has a keener tactical mind and is higher up in the heroes' hierarchy. He can be the heroes' commander or a commanding officer *under* the heroes' authority.

COMMON SHIKIGAMI

This small spirit does little more than hang around, carry messages, spy on others, and become cannon fodder for the sorcerer who is able to summon and control it.

COOL TEACHER

Cool teachers stand out from ordinary teachers by being just that—cool. They are laid back and fun to listen to, and they actually know what they

AGENT 5 — PL 1

Str 11	Dex 13	Con 10	Int 14	Wis 10	Cha 12

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+5), Computers 2 (+4), Disable Device 5 (+7), Drive 4 (+5), Gather Information 6 (+7), Knowledge (current events) 2 (+4), Knowledge (streetwise) 4 (+6), Knowledge (technology) 4 (+6), Search 4 (+6), Stealth 5 (+6)

Feats: Equipment, Well-Informed
Equipment: Cellphones (2), PDA

Combat: Attack +1, Damage +0 (unarmed or by Equipment), Defense +2, Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +0, Reflex +3, Will +0

Abilities 10 + Skills 10 (40 ranks) + Feats 2 + Combat 6 + Saves 2 = 30

CLASS REP — PL 1

Str 8	Dex 11	Con 12	Int 12	Wis 10	Cha 12

Skills: Bluff 2 (+3), Diplomacy 3 (+4), Gather Information 3 (+4), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+4), Notice or another Knowledge skill at 1

Feats: Demonic Glare[1] 2, Minion (a School Kid), Teamwork

Combat: Attack +0, Grapple –1, Damage –1 (unarmed), Defense +0, Knockback –0, Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +1, Reflex +1, Will +0

Abilities 5 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 0 + Combat 0 + Saves 1 = 13

COMMANDER — PL 5

Str 10	Dex 12	Con 12	Int 13	Wis 12	Cha 14

Skills: Diplomacy 3 (+5), Intimidate 3 (+5), Knowledge (civics) 4 (5), Knowledge (tactics) 8 (+9), Notice 2 (+3), Profession (officer) 4 (+5)

Feats: Equipment 2, Leadership, Rousing Speech[1], Teamwork
Equipment: Camouflaged uniform, commlink, field laptop, pistol (+3 damage)

Combat: Attack +4, Grapple +4, Damage +0 (unarmed), +3 (pistol), Defense +5, Knockback –0, Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +3, Reflex +1, Will +2

Abilities 13 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 5 + Powers 0 + Combat 18 + Saves 3 = 45

COMMON SHIKIGAMI — PL 5

Str 12	Dex 16	Con 16	Int 8	Wis 12	Cha 8

Skills: Knowledge (arcane lore) 8 (+7), Notice 4 (+5), Survival 4 (+5)

Powers: Blast 2 (magic; Affects Corporeal), **Flight 2**, **Immunity 3** (aging, suffocation), **Insubstantial 4** (Continuous; Permanent; Innate), **Shrinking 4** (Continuous; Permanent; Innate)

Combat: Attack +6 (includes +1 due to size), Grapple +3, Damage +2 (blast), Defense +7 (includes +1 due to size), Knockback –3, Initiative +3

Saving Throws: Toughness +3, Fortitude +3, Reflex +7, Will +5

Abilities 16 + Skills 4 (16 ranks) + Feats 0 + Powers 38 + Combat 22 + Saves 8 = 88

COOL TEACHER — PL 1

Str 9	Dex 10	Con 10	Int 14	Wis 13	Cha 14

Skills: Computers 2 (+4), Craft (writing) 4 (+6), Diplomacy 6 (+8), Knowledge (choose one related to teaching field) 6 (+8), Knowledge (history) 5 (+7), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+5), Profession (teacher) 6 (+7), Sense Motive 4 (+5)

Feats: Truth Sense[1]

Combat: Attack +0, Grapple –1, Damage –1 (unarmed), Defense +0, Knockback –0, Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +2, Reflex +0, Will +2

Abilities 10 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 1 + Powers 0 + Combat 0 + Saves 3 = 23

are talking about. Remove some Charisma and lower the Knowledge and interaction skills to get an average teacher.

CUTE PET-LIKE THING

It may look like a monkey... or a rat... it *could* be a cute little puppy. Really, what was the artist thinking when she designed this thing? A cute pet is unlike the pets in **Chapter 5,** in that its only purpose is to look adorable and perhaps perform a trick or two.

MISSION CONTROLLER

In high-tech battles, the mission controller does the fighting from a monitor console (or equivalent alien, magic, or alternate technology), providing the heroes with important battlefield information to carry out their duties.

SCHOOL KID

Average students blend into the background most of the time, but they can be a source of information on school life, as well as unexpected support.

SUPPORT TECHIE

While not a true scientific genius, the support techie is there to perform routine maintenance on mecha, power armor, mystic weapons, and the like.

SUPPORTING CAST CONCEPTS

While most members of the supporting cast fall into the grayness of extras, some can stand out and follow character concepts. The hero concepts found at the beginning of this chapter may also apply to supporting characters.

THE UNFLAGGING ADMIRER

Something between a friend and a minion, the admirer has a fanatical devotion to you or your friends. He's well intentioned but mostly useless, except on one brilliant occasion where his unique insight can solve an entire problem.

THE LOYAL OPPOSITION

This character has two settings: critical and condescending. No matter what you do, this character will always criticize you, but that may be because he really wants you to achieve your full potential, since even when he adamantly opposes your plan, he will be fully behind you when it's time to carry it out.

THE CONFIDANTE

This one is your best friend, the one you can trust with the secrets of all the weirdness that's going on in your life. While not able to do anything about the demons, ghost, and monsters you have to fight on a daily basis, at least you can come to her and tell her what you feel about it.

THE SUPPORTIVE RELATIVE

This is a little like the confidante, except that you're related. Your whole family may know all about what you do in your heroic endeavors, but it's this one who will do anything for you.

THE COMIC RIVAL

While he may try to be a thorn in your side, all he achieves is making a fool of himself. He might actually and truly hate you and betray you to the real villains later in the story, but usually he's so minor league that when he's confronted with true evil, he backs off and seeks you for protection.

CUTE PET-LIKE THING — PL X

Str 3*	Dex 15	Con 10	Int 2	Wis 12	Cha 10

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+10), Bluff 9 (+9), Notice 3 (+4), Stealth 0 (+10*)

Feats: Kawaii[1]

Powers: Shrinking 8 (Continuous; Permanent; Innate)**, Super-Senses 1** (low-light vision) * Includes Shinking modifiers

Combat: Attack +4*, Grapple –4, Damage –3 (unarmed), Defense +4*, Knockback +2, Initiative +2

Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +2, Reflex +4, Will +1

Abilities 0 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 1 + Powers 10 + Combat 8 + Saves 4 = 30

MISSION CONTROLLER — PL 1

Str 10	Dex 12	Con 13	Int 14	Wis 12	Cha 10

Skills: Computers 6 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+8), Notice 6 (+7), Sense Motive 6 (+7)

Feats: Assessment, Improved Initiative, Online Research[1], Second Chance (Computers when operating sensor equipment), Skill Mastery (Computers, Knowledge [tactics], Notice and Sense Motive)

Combat: Attack +0, Grapple +0, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +0, Knockback –1, Initiative +6

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +2, Reflex +1, Will +3

Abilities 11 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 5 + Powers 0 + Combat 0 + Saves 3 = 25

SCHOOL KID — PL 1

Str 8	Dex 11	Con 12	Int 10	Wis 10	Cha 10

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+2), Bluff 2 (+2), Gather Information 3 (+3), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+3), Notice or another Knowledge skill at 2

Feats: Set-Up, Teamwork

Combat: Attack +0, Grapple –1, Damage –1 (unarmed), Defense +0, Knockback –0, Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +1, Reflex +1, Will +0

Abilities 1 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 2 + Powers 0 + Combat 0 + Saves 1 = 7

SUPPORT TECHIE — PL 0

Str 12	Dex 13	Con 13	Int 12	Wis 10	Cha 8

Skills: Computers 5 (+6), Craft (electronic) 5 (+6), Craft (mechanical) 5 (+6), Knowledge (technology) 5 (+6), Profession (technician) 4 (+4)

Feats: Equipment 1, Mechanical Genius[1] (setting's base technology), Tech Familiarity[1] (one exotic technology base in the setting)
Equipment: Various tools, gauges and scanner equipment

Powers: Quickness 3 (One Task [repairing machinery])

Combat: Attack +0, Grapple +1, Damage +1 (unarmed), Defense +0, Knockback –1, Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +3, Reflex +2, Will +0

Abilities 8 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 1 + Combat 0 + Saves 3 = 21

CHAPTER 7: MANGA SERIES



As discussed previously, manga and anime are not genres but media, and as such, there are a multitude of stories and series that they can tell.

All the chapters before this one laid down the groundwork to create and run a manga-inspired series, whether it belongs to the popular mecha and action genres or to some subtler and more subdued niche genre. With the tools at hand, it's time to show what the medium can do.

The following are but a scant few examples of the many stories that can be played in a manga and anime style. Each entry gives a general description of what the series is about and its elements as well as suggested plots that you could play, giving you a basis to construct your own series.

SOUL MIRRORS

Genre: Mecha, science fiction, war drama

Power Level 6 (humans) / 12 (Phyren and mecha)

Scope: Full series

Tech Level: 4

Theme and Tone: Abuse and betrayal, fighting for the right cause; serious and at points, horrific.

Story Elements: Mecha, alien invaders, subtle psychic powers, alien species.

Synopsis: An accident during the research for new power sources breached the wall between the world of humans and the world of the Phyren. Humanity didn't stand a chance against the giant, energy-based life forms until the first mecha were developed, using a trapped entity as a power source and control interface. A group of mecha pilots will discover the true nature of the war and be placed in the unenviable position of trying to end it.

A war is raging between humanity and creatures from another dimension. Will the heroes repel them using their mecha or go deep into the mystery to find what started the war and, possibly, end it?

BACKGROUND

The world of *Soul Mirrors* is Earth in the year 2024. Due to the energy crisis, several experiments were conducted to find a new energy source, and in 2020, the first Breach appeared. Nobody is sure what caused it, and several countries and corporations blamed each other, but there was little time for recrimination as the first Phyren began to emerge from the Breach.

Varying in size and shape, the first Phyren were relatively easy to deal with, but the problem was that each Phyren death released a burst of radioactivity around it. Thus, the first battle zones were rendered uninhabitable.

Several Breach sites have been identified as containing stable portals to whatever world the Phyren come from, and the surrounding areas have been evacuated and cordoned off by the host nation's military. However, random,

smaller Breaches can appear without warning, stretching the forces of each nation to their breaking point.

In 2022, the first HiMWP (High-Mobility Weapons Platform, nicknamed "Himmel" or "heaven," in German) was deployed by the Rheinhardt Corporation from Germany. These mecha units provided what they promised: quick response and devastating firepower. However, rather than sell the first units to even the German military, Rheinhardt secretly trained its own mecha corps and then offered its services as a corporate-run mercenary operation. International pressure, as well as competing designs, pushed Reinhardt to sell Himmel units as well as lease out its base technology, which in turn caused the proliferation of competing mecha models, but Rheinhardt's Himmel Corps were always the best.

The Phyren War raged on with minor skirmishes, but the new mecha units proved effective in containing the outpouring from stable Breaches, as well as finding and closing new, unstable ones. However, early in 2024, a new breed of Phyren emerged, more humanoid-looking and armed with fearsome energy weapons that the mecha were barely able to contain.

The Phyren incursions have so far been random and sporadic, but they are facing a deeply fragmented world that will be unable to resist an organized invasion. The national governments have lost power to the corporations that can better protect the people with their state-of-the-art mechas and highly trained pilots. However, the corporations, particularly Rheinhardt, have something to hide, and that secret might cost humanity its survival.

HEROES

In *Soul Mirrors*, the heroes should be mecha pilots. Since the mecha are a strong and common plot element, the GM should not ask the players to purchase the mecha with their own heroes' power points, but rather they should devote their power points to purchasing traits that will make them better pilots.

The setting offers many options for heroes besides the mecha angle, though. The Phyren are not what they appear, and the Breaches have awakened certain latent powers in a select few people. Heroes can purchase a couple of ranks in Super-Senses or other minor powers that are unexplained, and in the face of the Phyren incursions, unresearched. See the description on the Phyren to know why.

The world is defined as much by the Phyren incursions as by corporate greed, so the heroes can play freelance industrial spies, corporate cronies, embattled national soldiers, reporters, or any combination and collection of them.

There *is* also the option of making Phyren and half-Phyren heroes, but they will need to be armed with the total or partial truth about the setting.

PLOTS

Most plots in *Soul Mirrors* should center around the war with the Phyren, either in mecha or on foot. However, discovering the secret behind the Phyren and their relationship with the corporations should also be a major plot element, customized around who the heroes actually are. Corporate mecha pilots may have to betray their employers once the secret is revealed, while brave reporters will lead adventures laden with paranoia as they uncover secret after secret, not knowing who to trust with their discoveries.

ELEMENTS

There is a new type of energy descriptor called "Z-phase," short for "zero-point energy phase." The Phyren are composed of z-phase energy in different densities to the point that their outer shells behave like matter. Z-phase reactors have been powering cities and advanced machinery since the year 2003, and Breaches (as well as Phyren) emit pulses in the z-phase frequencies of the spectrum.

The minor psychic powers that a few, very rare and unique heroes may be able to harness are also derived from z-phase energy. While no studies have been publicized, Rheinhardt *does* know about people able to channel subtle manifestations of z-phase. The most common ability is being able to control the Himmel mecha on a higher level than the simple control interface, but they also include special sensory powers and temporary boosts of energy, speed, and overall mental and physical prowess.

HERO SPECIES

There are three species templates to choose from, human, Phyren, and half-Phyren. See the description on the Phyren for guidelines on defining their traits to suit what you want to do with this series.

MECHA

There are several mecha models, enough for you to customize one of the samples in **Chapter 3** or to create one of your own, as several worldwide corporations put out new models every year. In addition to either the Unstable or Limited Power Source drawbacks, all of these mecha will have at least another mecha drawback except Parasitic Power Source. Rheinhardt mecha do not have these drawbacks, which makes them the leaders in the field, but at a terrible cost.

THE PHYREN

Most people believed the Phyren to be nothing more than monsters, but this belief was shattered in the latest onslaught. The truth is that the Phyren are the normal inhabitants of a parallel, energy-based dimension, and the first to come through the Breaches were just their natural fauna, driven mad by a matter-based universe.

The true Phyren people have known about our matter-based dimension for centuries, but their religion (and later their science) forbid any contact with due reason. Rheinhardt's experiments into alternate energy sources discovered the Phyren's home and mistook it for the secret behind zero-point energy, which they began to siphon into their z-phase reactors. Unbeknownst to them, what they were doing was sucking any Phyren life form out of phase with its home dimension and imprisoning it in the reactors. While the first experiments only captured their equivalent to animals and plants, the Phyren realized the danger of human incursions into their home when the first *people* began to be absorbed by Rheinhardt's z-phase reactors.

It's been several months since Rheinhardt learned that they are exploiting sentient beings, and this only fueled their greed and amoral scientific curiosity. The latest Himmel mecha are so easy to control and power because, at their core, lies a kidnapped Phyren child, grown artificially by the mecha's reactor. This child controls the mecha's intuitive movements. Himmel pilots report feeling watched inside their cockpits, and a few have also heard voices. A few also develop a strong, emotional attachment to their mecha. It will take a hero to finally *hear* and understand the pain of the Phyren trapped inside.

Phyren creatures have an Insubstantial 3 power with the Innate feat and Permanent drawback, but their Strength trait costs double, as it has the Affect Corporeal extra. They cannot travel through dimensions naturally, but they now possess technology to create Breaches and take the war into the human dimension. Some rare Phyren have the power to coalesce their shape into a corporeal, human form that they have used to spy and infiltrate human society, looking for ways to stop the war. In this form, they are able to breed with humans, creating a child that is human on the outside but intimately attuned to z-phase manifestations. The exact traits of Phyren creatures, beings, and half-breeds are yours to define according to what you want to add to this series.

THE DARK FORTRESS

Genre: Historical, mystery, martial arts **Power Level:** 8

Scope: Full series **Tech Level:** 2

Theme and Tone: Supernatural mystery, intrigue, and deception. Action-packed and tense, with some light moments.

Story Elements: Samurai, ninja, politics, martial arts, displaced heroes, minor magic.

Synopsis: Under orders from the newly-installed shogun, heroes will hunt down and destroy supernatural forces intent on keeping the land in chaos, getting closer to the source, until the final battle against the mastermind, an onmyouji wizard from the ancient past.

Medieval Japan is struggling to reach an era of peace after long years of clan wars and conflict, but a dark presence seems intent of keeping chaos and destruction reigning in the islands. It will be up to extraordinary heroes to find and destroy them, if peace is ever to settle in the lands of the Rising Sun.

BACKGROUND

A few years after the battle of Sekigahara (Oct. 21st, 1600), new shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa is no closer to bringing final peace and unity to Japan, embattled by the efforts of the Western Kingdoms still loyal to the Toyotomi clan, despite their embarrassing defeat at Sekigahara. This is normal, and the conflict would end at last in 1615 with the fall of Osaka Castle, but there is a force working against Tokugawa that threatens the normal flow of events.

Toyotomi loyalists are in open revolt despite their leader's defeat, and reports arrive that Tokugawa troops are being wiped out. Sometimes they never arrive at their destination, and they never return. Fearing supernatural trouble, Tokugawa orders his top intelligence minister, legendary ninja Hattori Hanzo, to dispatch secret agents to find out what is happening.

What neither the new shogun nor his master spy know is that there is an unaccounted force behind the Toyotomi clan. Hailing from centuries past, an onmyouji is manipulating the magical lines of power in the land, reusing the designs of the old wizards of the Heian era. The Toyotomi loyalists now have... things on their side, spirits of all kind that drive men mad, monsters from old legends and myths, and weapons of mystic might.

Onmyou-do magic in the last years of the Sengoku period is a forgotten science, and thus, Tokugawa cannot trust the reports he's receiving.

How the story progresses from here is up to the heroes.

HEROES

In *The Dark Fortress*, heroes can come from any role in a samurai fantasy story. They can be young bushi wishing to establish a name for themselves by rooting out the evil that threatens the new shogun, wandering exorcists who understand the nature of the Toyotomi's newfound power, ninja sent by Hanzo or any other ninja clan for any purpose, etc.

What must be common to them is that they must possess abilities beyond the norm, for what they will be facing requires power and resourcefulness.

Although not expressly made for dimensional/temporal exile stories, it's quite possible that the heroes come from the present day or from the ancient past, pursuing the evil onmyouji through the barriers of time into medieval Japan.

PLOTS

The main plot of *The Dark Fortress* is defeating the evil spirits that are fighting on Toyotomi's side and delving into their origin, eventually discovering the ancient wizard behind the conflict. This can have many variants by changing the villain's nature. He might plan to get rid of the shoguns and return the imperial line to power, or he might want to destroy the country or wrest the reins of government to his hands through careful manipulation. He might even be trying to fix a mistake that caused the Sengoku period. He might be trying to resuscitate a lost love and needs the power of the land in an uproar for an onmyou-do ritual.

The heroes' subplots and backgrounds can enrich this apparently simple plotline as they get together for different reasons, and the discoveries and battles either bring them together or split them apart. Make sure to weave the heroes' complications, ties, and histories into the development of the story. Is one an orphan? Have him discover he's descended from the wizard, and it's his blood that helps the wizard remain in the world. Is she the daughter of a samurai family that was wiped out by the Toyotomi, sworn to avenge them by taking up the clan's arms? Let her find that the ghosts of her father and brothers have joined Toyotomi's supernatural army... by their will.

ELEMENTS

Chi (spelled "ki" for a more Japanese feel) powers the magic of onmyou-do through its rituals, so it's the main additional descriptor that this setting will have. This is more fully explained in **Chapter 4: Martial Arts**.



MARTIAL ARTS

Speaking of which... feel free to go crazy with the martial arts, but remember that in Japan, most schools focus on the sword, while a few others teach handling different weapons (female samurai would be more adept with the naginata, for example). Most martial arts powers will be unavailable to the heroes if they don't have the weapon with which they learned their powers.

MAGIC

An extension of martial arts, but outside of onmyou-do, the magic available to the heroes should be more like folklore and less like chucking out spells at will. The Ritualist feat would better simulate this, allowing heroes relative freedom to create magical effects by tying them to a long ritual. Alternatively, you might designate that all magic-like powers have the Duration drawback, requiring one to five minutes to perform.

Onmyou-do, in the hands of the main antagonist, should be rather powerful, though, and anyone wishing to learn powers that can be used with such liberty should justify how they know secrets forgotten by time.

GHOSTS AND SPIRITS

The two main components of Toyotomi's supernatural allies will be ghosts and shikigami. They should increase in power at the same pace as the heroes and have plots weaved around their particularities. For example, an episode can feature the ghost of a fearsome warrior whom the heroes simply cannot defeat in combat, but they can discover what keeps him earthbound and deal with *that* instead.

"CLASSES"

Heroes can have clearly defined roles in the group, aiming their advancement a little towards a particular direction. A samurai will be a samurai, and any feat and power should reflect that, just like the ninja will have different abilities than the Taoist monk.

DESTINY GUARD URAGEAS

Genre: Epic fantasy, dimensional exiles — **Power Level:** 5 (starting) to 10 (maximum)

Scope: Full series — **Tech Level:** 3 (Earth), 2 (Zearam)

Theme and Tone: Epic duty, heroism, urgency. Tone should be bright and energetic and a little larger than life, with some "fish-out-of-water" comedy moments

Story Elements: Magic, dimensional exiles, secret conspiracies, magical girls (and boys)

Synopsis: The heroes discover that they are descendants of Pillars, heroes of prophecy that protect the gates between the colliding worlds of Earth and Zearam. Forces on both sides want to exploit the nearness of the worlds for personal gain, and it will be up to the Pillars to stop this.

A group of heroes discovers that they share a heritage with people from the mystical world of Zearam. Not only are both planets on a collision course in their dimensional orbits, but also, in order to stop the plans of evil forces on both worlds, they must become the Pillars of legend and fight on both sides of the dimensional fence.

BACKGROUND

There are other worlds in the universe, and some work under different cosmic rules. Such is the case of Urageas, a world that exists in a twin state as the magical land of Uranae and the harsh world of Gaea, known to their respective inhabitants as Zearam and Earth.

Both worlds exist on different planes of existence, but their dimensional orbits take them close with regularity. In Earth, the conjunction happens every 20 to 50 years, but in Zearam, this happens every 500 years. Zearam is a land of magic, where those with enough will can impress their wishes into the fabric of the world and make them come true. Earth is a harsh and challenging world in comparison, but much richer in resources.

While there are prophecies on both worlds about their dimensional closeness, the records on Earth have mostly vanished, although there are little clues found in the most obscure texts. In Zearam, however, the prophecy is told and retold by the popular tales of the Seven Pillars, even if the truth is known only to the religious and arcane scholars who, as the conjunction approaches, are alert for the signs of the Seven Pillars manifesting.

Meanwhile, on Earth, the heroes note that their parents (or guardians) are becoming rather nervous. Each of them receives a family heirloom and no explanation, and then one fateful night, the sky opens and those same relics glow with magical light, transporting the heroes to Zearam, where they find out that they are the Pillars, like their parents before them, and they have been called to protect the gate between worlds during the conjunction.

In Zearam, there is one scholar who has been expecting the conjunction. He uncovered secret texts of magic that allowed him to reach towards Earth even before the conjunction and enlist the aid of a like-minded villain. Together, they plan to seize control of the most important centers of magical power in both worlds in order to lock them together and become the rulers of a forcibly unified Urageas... without knowing that such would bring the destruction of both worlds.

HEROES

In *Destiny Guard Urageas,* all the heroes are expected to be Pillars, whether they are native to Earth or Zearam. As time on Earth passes faster, the Pillar tradition is carried from parent to child each generation, and thus the line remains largely uninterrupted. On Zearam, however, a few of the lines may have blurred and the tradition lost or forgotten.

Heroes are created at power level 5 at the beginning of the story, but they are expected to advance. They receive 3 ranks of Device for free, to represent the heirloom talisman that they receive. Amongst its traits, the device must have Super-Movement (dimensional, Earth-Zearam only) with Power Loss (can only travel between worlds at a precise time of the week and in a particular place of power, uncommon, major, 3 points). Time and location for dimensional travel can be discerned with a Knowledge (arcane lore) check (DC 20), and the GM will set each date and location arbitrarily, as needed by the plot.

The different specialty skills available for heroes depend on the world in which they were raised. Earthlings will have popular culture and technology available as Knowledge skills, for example, while Zearamites will have arcane lore.

Encourage players to design their talismans along a theme that represents the Pillar, and this theme should also guide the different powers the heroes will learn with time, either intrinsic to them or increasing the talisman's power with additional ranks of Device.

As for the Pillars, there is no restriction in choosing the themes they represent. Even their number (Seven) was chosen arbitrarily because it's a common number in magic. Either fill up the number of Pillars with supporting cast or reduce the number of Pillars to the number of heroes.

PLOTS

The story of *Destiny Guard Urageas* takes place in both Earth and Zearam and is as much about the quest to stop the evil scholar and his Earthling ally from locking the worlds in place as it is about how the heroes adapt to their role as guardians.

The story should start with the Earthlings being shunted into Zearam and learning about their destinies, as well as meeting the Zearamite heroes with whom they will share their adventures. Eventually, as they learn to use their talismans and their own powers as Pillars, they will discover that the evil plot spans both worlds. They will return to Earth, where they will teach their Zearamite friends to adapt.

On Earth, the heroes' parents will reveal what they know about the Pillars, which is decidedly not much, as they weren't faced with any crisis during their tenure as guardians.

ELEMENTS

Magic is the only new descriptor heroes have to consider when learning powers. Feel free to introduce new descriptors based on specific powers or creatures you want to introduce.

FANTASY

There are many types of fantasy elements a story can have, and this framework leaves it intentionally open so you can include whatever you want. It is recommended that the look and feel of Zearam be apart from the traditional European Middle Ages basis for many fantasy worlds, to give the world a more unique feeling. For example, what would the world look if the Renaissance and the Enlightenment movement had come to the Arab world instead of Europe?

CULTURE FESTIVAL AMAZING PREPARATION SQUAD

Genre: Comedy	**Power Level:** 6
Scope: Half series	**Tech Level**: 3

Theme and Tone: General nonsense, weird farcical situations; outrageous and ridiculous fun.

Story Elements: School life, ninja, aliens... insert more weirdness at will.

Synopsis: For some strange reason, this year's Culture Festival at Shinonome High School is attracting more attention than usual, and the students of the different classes must surmount weird obstacles before they can finally host their festival.

A group of high school students encounter a series of bizarre events as they prepare for their school's cultural festival, dealing with strangeness including everything from an annoyingly enthusiastic principal to a lost mole person from a subterranean kingdom.

BACKGROUND

Shinonome High is the local high school for a large town in the mountains. There is nothing special about town or school, but a series of circumstances and coincidences that stretch believability have brought it to the attention of several factions:

- The Enhanced Japanese Self-Defense Force, the ultra-secret mecha-operating division of the Japanese military has received a warbled report of a possible terrorist attack on the premises.
- The Zapaxis Ascendancy, an alien empire of cat-girls, believes their next queen will be revealed in a strange Earthling ritual called a "raffle."
- The Hanabi Yakuza clan mistook a communication and is under the belief that their secret payoff of a government official will happen at the school's Kissing Booth.
- A resident magical girl dreams that the Song of the Apocalypse will be sung by an evil fairy during a karaoke contest. (She had a heavy dinner the night before.)
- An enterprising barbarian mole person from a fantasy underground kingdom took a wrong turn in Hokkaido on his way to China to recover an ancient artifact to save his princess.
- And so on, and so forth.

The school itself is fairly normal for a Japanese high school. It's just that an epic amount of bad luck brought a bunch of weirdoes and psychos to it all at the same time.

Each class and club is supposed to organize an attraction of some sort. Examples include a haunted mansion ride, a photo exhibit, a videogame arcade, or a thematic lunch café. Along with the static booths and exhibits, events include various contests, raffles, and competitive games. All in all, the Culture Festival is expected to be a day of fun and games for students, family, and general visitors alike, all ready for the strangeness to start intruding from the organization phase to the closing events.

HEROES

The heroes are the unlucky appointees to the festival organization committee. Some may be members of the student council, others can be club presidents, class representatives, or just random volunteers.

In addition, heroes can also be the infiltrated agents of some strange faction, like one of the aforementioned alien cat-girls trying to pass herself as a transfer student (human heroes may question how come they get such a large amount of transfer students the week before the Culture Festival).

PLOTS

This series hangs by its subplots, which interweave and mingle to create the main plot of seeing the Festival through. Each hero and NPC has his or her own agenda and his or her own subplot, which should complicate those of the rest of the cast.

Spice things up by introducing bizarre supporting characters, like a chivalric kendo club captain who believes himself the reincarnation of Miyamoto Musashi, or an overenthusiastic principal who has his fingers in every step of the planning.

And maybe, if you feel like it, you can come up with a reason *why* all these madmen have suddenly converged on such an important event for the student body.

ELEMENTS

This is a salad setting in which you can introduce anything imaginable, although all in good fun. Cat girls, mecha, sad girls in snow, martial arts, vampires, Yakuza... anything is fair game.

UNORTHODOX COMBAT

While it's almost a requisite to have fights break out between the oddball factions infiltrating the school, real combat is not the focus of this story, so you should look at the rules in this book for the options to run different types of conflict, as well as the comedy systems in the previous chapter.

MUGEN NO ODYSSEY

Genre: Science fiction, war drama	**Power Level:** 10-12
Scope: Ongoing series	**Tech Level:** 5

Theme and Tone: Perseverance and solidarity. The series can be poignant and dramatic, with moments of bright hope as well as the darkest despair.

Story Elements: Mysterious aliens, space travel, power-ups, cute and mysterious girls.

Synopsis: After the Battle of Illion Sector was lost, the only survivors belonged to the scattered crews from all sides of the conflict. They had to come together in the battleship *Odyssey* in order to survive, as strange forces from outside known space harried and attacked them. Now, fighting their mutual distrust as well as the aliens themselves, they are fighting just to get home.

The Battle of Illion Sector marked the fall of the Galactic Empire and possibly of civilization itself. Now, the survivors from that bloody battle are trying to return home, fighting against the shadowy forces that the Empire held at bay and finding the key to returning peace to the galaxy.

BACKGROUND

In an undetermined time, the Galactic Empire virtually governed the entire galaxy, but such an enormous thing was not meant to last, and the different factions within the Imperial Council warred with each other. The last straw was when House Illion stole the hyperadvanced computer core that served as the main governing tool of the Imperial House.

The Battle of Illion Sector marked the most destructive conflict in recorded history, as the Imperial House rallied all its allies, buying off those who couldn't be swayed by other means. House Illion also rallied others behind it, who saw the chance to unite behind a single banner to overthrow the millennial rule of the royal line.

The battle raged for a full decade as the different fleets annihilated each other, laying waste to the entire sector of the galaxy. What nobody remembered was that the computer core did not only keep track of information coming from all the corners of the Empire. It also coordinated an ancient but forgotten defense system that kept the Chthons at bay, a race of violent and inscrutable aliens that took this chance to invade the galaxy and destroy all sides of the conflict.

The sole surviving battleship, the *Odyssey,* has dedicated itself to scouring the sector in search of survivors. Illion Sector is uninhabitable now. As it prepares to set sail towards the Imperial capital to warn them of the dangers of the Chthons, it discovers a last distress signal from an escape pod, which only contains a mute little girl who cannot explain who she is or what she is doing there. The word "Cassandra" is written on a plate of metal found inside the pod, so she is called by that name.

The crew of the *Odyssey* is composed of members of all the warring houses, mercenaries, and civilians from the Ilion systems. Forced to cooperate in order to survive, tensions in the ship are high, to say the least.

The hero-generals of the conflict have access to technology that makes them more than human, the Organic Living Machine Processing Analogs (Olympus, nicknamed "Olympians"). The Olympians take the shape of a piece of jewelry, but upon command, they cover their user in organic body armor that grants incredible powers. Unlike other machines, the Olympians are alive and have a personality, although only their user can hear them. All Olympians can sense that Cassandra is important. They cannot tell that she is an Olympian like them, but one that doesn't need a host in order to exist; in fact, she's actually the Imperial computer core and the only one who knows how to return the Chthons back to their place of origin, if only she was returned to the main controlling array in the Imperial capital...

Any resemblance to Greek myths and Homer's *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey* is purely, blatantly, and unabashedly intentional.

HEROES

The heroes are advised to be hero-generals. "Ordinary" heroes have a power level 10 limit, but the possession of an Olympian increases this to the setting's maximum power level of 12. Hero-generals should be modeled after heroes of Greek mythology, whether they were involved in the Trojan War or Ulysses' travels (Hector, Achilles, Ulysses, Ajax, Paris, Helen, Circe, etc.) or have their own legend somewhere else (Hercules, Jason, Medea, Hypollita, etc.). The Olympians, for their part, should be modeled after Greek gods (Zeus, Athena, Minerva, Hades, etc.)

The powers that heroes can have on their own or derived from their Olympian are up to each player, but they should be modeled after their mythological inspirations. Since Olympians are symbiotes, they are part of the heroes' powers and cannot be taken away. Most Olympians will grant their hero the ability to survive in the vacuum of space.

You can create all the Houses and factions you need to keep the conflict inside the *Odyssey* complex and simmering, and it's also very much encouraged that heroes are grudging ex-enemies united by the threat of the Chthons, until they become friends by the end of the story.

It's advised that the actual captain of the *Odyssey* be an NPC in the form of Ulysses himself. It will even the balance of power amongst the players' backgrounds by not giving one special power over the others, although they *can* have a ranking assigned by the captain in the ship's unique and shifting command hierarchy.

PLOTS

While you may follow the plot of Homer's *The Odyssey* with adaptations to a high science fiction setting, you can also create your own encounters or pilfer from other myths. One that is particularly ripe for this is the story of Jason and the Argonauts. The main plot of *Mugen no Odyssey* is that heroes have to brave countless dangers to return to the Imperial Core. On the way, they have to discover who Cassandra really is and just how important a role in the galaxy's survival she plays. They also have to iron out the relationships between them and discover why instant super travel (hyperspace, jump gates, teleports, etc.) towards the Core does not work. A dangerous passage between the Chthonian battleship Scylla and the black hole known as Charybdis is a virtual must, as is an encounter with a lonely planetoid normally protected by some kind of cloaking screen, where the mysterious and alluring woman known as Sersi dwells.

ELEMENTS

While no particularly new energy type exists exclusively for this story, there are two important descriptors, "Olympian" and "Chthonic," that define the powers of both the heroes and their enigmatic enemies. This will serve as a handle for powers like Nullify, Mimic, and Boost. They have no in-game effect other than to identify the powers' origin.

THE CHTHON

The real meaning of the word is "of the earth" and represents ancient deities of the underworld, often related to fertility. Taking the same artistic license that anime is known for, in *Mugen no Odyssey,* the Chthons are extra-galactic aliens who can live without the sustenance of a home star, creatures of utter darkness who hunger for the life energy of the star-born species. They are the Titans of the Greek legends, the unspeakable deities of the Cthulhu Mythos, the xenomorphs of the *Alien* saga. The only thing that heroes should see of the Chthons during the first episodes is their monstrous warships and fighters, something out of artist H.R. Giger's worst nightmares. The aliens' true form is totally up to the GM, but the later they are shown, the better.

CASSANDRA

This girl is the series' driving plot device. As in many anime and manga, she's that mysterious little girl who holds the key to everything. The heroes are welcome to attempt to befriend her and draw her out from her autistic state, but she will only speak unintelligible prophecies and warnings, which the GM can use as ways to prod the heroes' in the right direction when they are stuck.

THE OLYMPIANS

The biomechanic symbiotes are the setting's excuse for the heroes to have the power of gods. Chthonic powers may be tailored especially to disable Olympians, or Olympians may have been created a long time ago (by another Greek rip-off called Daedalus...) especially to fight Chthons. The specifics of the Olympians' nature are up to you.

MECHA AND SPACESHIPS

The hero-generals and their Olympians can go hand-to-hand against Chthonic warships, but they need foot soldiers as well. While not strictly a mecha series, *Mugen no Odyssey* can include mecha fighter craft to use as background infantry or as the shape an Olympian power can take. A thematic recommendation is to name the mecha models *Spartans* and have the ship's mecha squads be limited to 300... Note that, due to the nature of the story, resources are limited, and each mecha lost is a serious blow to the *Odyssey*'s defenses.

ECHOES AND SHADOWS

Genre: Horror	**Power Level**: 5
Scope: Half series	**Tech Level:** 3

Theme and Tone: Secrets that shouldn't be kept, shouldn't be shared, and shouldn't be discovered. The tone is dark and should instill a feeling of isolation.

Story Elements: Unexplained mysteries, unseen ghosts, mild psychic powers.

Synopsis: When one of their classmates develops a strong phobia to shadows to the point that he jumps in front of the light train at night to bask in its headlights, a group of students from an isolated prefecture must figure out what is happening as others around them begin to fall prey to a strange shadow-madness, before they too are affected.

There is something preying on the students and teachers of Murika High. One by one, they are developing strange manias that range from obsessive/compulsive behaviors and persecution complexes to full-blown paranoia. Moreover, all of them have something to do with shadows. Will the students discover what is wrong before all their friends go mad?

BACKGROUND

The school is set in a small prefecture in Japan (although it can be in any other part of the world, as long as it's relatively isolated), where life is generally easy and without complications but with enough contact and communication with the outside world to provide the usual comforts of a city. Street crime is almost nonexistent, and it's perfectly safe to walk at night, although leaving the illuminated streets for the thick and looming forests sitting just beyond the peripheral avenues is not recommended without a light.

The woods surrounding the small city are dotted with rough terrain, and it's very easy to suffer an accident. Also, a cave system is rumored to open in a nearby mountain, where one can visit the underground streams that feed the city's water wells, but nobody has found a natural entrance yet; the only way to go down there is through the city's sewage and water distribution network.



In this apparently normal setting, shadows have real power. A long, very long time ago, the early settlers forged a deal with the shadowy beings that originally inhabited the territory: the people would stage a yearly festival in these spirits' honor, and the spirits would allow the people to prosper, giving them water from their underground homes.

The year the story begins, though, the last "priest" who remembered the proper way to honor the shadows has died, and the city's festival has lost its meaning, even more so with the new irrigation system just being inaugurated. Thus, the shadows strike.

The shadows are the ever-present sprites and faeries that agricultural societies feared and appeased, and with good reason. Despite being relatively reasonable, these beings are alien, terrifying, and remorseless. Now that the town has invited their anger, the shadows' revenge starts with the young of Murika High School, but it *will* extend to the rest of the city.

The heroes must solve the mystery before the upcoming Kagematsuri (or name appropriately if you set the story outside Japan), the "shadow festival" of Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year, or they will be doomed to madness.

HEROES

The heroes in this story are ordinary people, preferably students so that they can witness first-hand the bizarre personality changes in their friends. Being a supernatural story, subtle psychic powers are allowed, such as a single Super-Sense with the Unreliable or Uncontrolled drawback. Professional exorcists and paranormal investigators are allowed to know a few rites and prayers that can work, but again, these are very low-key and can barely hope to stand a chance against the ancestral power of the shadows.

While it's preferable that the heroes be native to the town, visitors from outside are also adequate if they come following the strange news of the psychological epidemic that seems to be spreading amongst the students of this town.

Heroes in this story should also have some deep-seated complication, some secret or personality flaw that might spell their doom when it's their turn to attract the shadows' attentions. These dark secrets are supposed to be a thematic echo to the theme of shadows; they may be fighting primordial shadows from the spirit world, but the heroes have their own inner shadows to contend with as well.

PLOTS

Being a horror mystery, the plot of *Echoes and Shadow* is relatively straightforward: find the source of the madness gripping the students, then try to solve it. However, as with horror stories, the meat is in the details.

Have the players create strong personal ties to each other and various NPCs (classmates, teachers, significant others, etc.), and then attack them mercilessly, to emphasize the growing feeling of isolation. That cute girl who was warming up to one of the heroes' advances suddenly cannot sleep, and her eyes die as her inner darkness consumes her from within. Or, that trusted teacher develops the strange idea that people's shadows can see him... The heroes will be the only ones to realize that something is *seriously* wrong, and nobody will believe them.

The heroes' dark secrets will be the source of the subplots that push the story forward along with the investigation. The shadows know what the heroes are hiding, and they will use that to drive them mad, little by little.

ELEMENTS

The "monsters" in this story are the shadows, and they should remain nameless. They have no traits, as they are plot devices. If the heroes truly manage to confront the willful shadows, then they should go mad, no saving throw allowed, and they become the story's next casualty. What they want and how they do it is up to you, but their motif represents also things that are unspoken, shameful secrets that they use to torture their victims.

SHADOW MADNESS

As a mode of unorthodox combat, the shadows will attack heroes and NPCs alike subtly, in the dark, grabbing hold of their most shameful secrets and what they hate the most about themselves. Use the rules for dreamscapes and soulscapes in the previous chapter, with each assault being a single attack that leaves the heroes clueless about what just happened. As the heroes' or NPCs' sanity degrades, they will develop some obsession that relates both to their secret as well as the darkness or shadows, and they will begin to see strange, bizarre, and horrible things (take a cue from Asian horror movies and their American remakes, like *The Grudge*, *The Eye, The Ring, Dark Waters*, and *One Missed Call*).

KAGEMATSURI

The shadows are gearing up to deal a fatal strike during Kagematsuri. Since the festival no longer honors them properly, it has become hollow, and they will make sure that the people who forgot them are left hollow, driving everyone mad in perhaps the only scene in which the shadows will become visible. You should decide how the heroes should be able to stop this. Is a true sacrifice required at the Kagematsuri, dooming one of the heroes to die? Can they somehow seal the shadows' home in the caverns beneath the city? Should they destroy the irrigation system that violates the accord between the shadows and the early settlers?

LEGEND OF DEMON FIST

Genre: Shounen, martial arts	**Power Level**: 15
Scope: Ongoing series	**Tech Level:** 2 (previously 3)

Theme and Tone: Fighting against all odds; gory, full of action and combat scenes.

Story Elements: Martial arts, ancient societies, secret powers, postapocalyptic times.

Synopsis: As the world spirals to an end, a group of heroes discover the secret behind the rapid rise to power of the 108 Demons, a gang of super-powered martial artists that took over the world and plunged it into chaos. They will learn and grow in power until they can face the Demons' leader and end his reign of terror once and for all.

The world is broken. Society is gone, and only the rule of the strong remains. A sect of criminal martial artists shattered civilization to impose their tyrannical rule, and now, only the heroes, harnessing a power long forgotten, stand between them and a whimpering apocalypse.

BACKGROUND

Organized crime has always been a headache for societies. They didn't know what was coming when the 108 Demons, a relatively minor gang in China, suddenly began taking over other gangs, toppled the Triads, and then took over the Yakuza. By the time international police forces began to pay attention, it was too late. The 108 Demons revealed themselves as supreme martial artists, capable of channeling the power of chi into destructive feats of prowess, annihilating any army in their path.

In a matter of years, the 108 Demons spread around the world, dividing the continents amongst themselves. They gathered new followers from the violent and corrupt, and in their greed and lust for power, they broke down any pretense at law and order. When they fight amongst each other, they scorch the land around them. They have the power of gods but the inclinations of the demons they named themselves after.

The world has sunk into anarchy. The luckiest fall under the dominion of a Demon with some organization skills, but most of the world has become a series of autonomous regions. They swiftly crush any attempt at coalitions and rebuilding of nations .

Technology and progress have taken a dive, and many regions have sunk back into a medieval state, the people unable to link together to sustain any level of civilization. Aging rifles coexist with bows and arrows, but no weapon can compete with the power of the Demons' martial arts, a power they have shared with their closest lieutenants, although they still can't reach the level of their masters.

Unknown to the world, the 108 Demons were not always like this. They lacked the discipline to even master normal martial arts, let alone awaken their chi.

The secret lies deep in the mountains of China, where the 108 Demons started. They found a living yet slumbering dragon, and they drank its blood.

Now, the dragon has awakened and has realized his power has been stolen. Angry but impotent, he uses his knowledge of ancient magic to travel the world and look for heroes that can learn his secrets the hard, but true, way, and he has issued a call. With heroes learning the true power of the dragon's martial arts, it's only a matter of time before there is finally a power to oppose the 108 Demons and protect humanity from their excesses.

HEROES

The heroes will start relatively weak, being normal people until the dragon contacts them. They will probably have a reason to accept the offer and fight the 108 Demons and their minions, such as a loved one kidnapped or killed by a gang raid, their homes destroyed, or other tragedies or disasters. Heroes should start at power level 3-5 in this prologue.

Another option is that they were originally members of the 108 Demons' gangs, but have seen the error of their ways and now fight for justice and to mend their ways.

When the dragon finds them, they get the chance to fight back, and they become power level 8 characters. From that point, life will be a constant struggle for improvement, as they train hard to reach the maximum power level, to face the 108 Demons themselves.

PLOTS

Like a typical shounen series, *Legend of Demon Fist* has a plot whose purpose is to give an excuse for fighting, divided into arcs that span several episodes. The first arc will be about how the heroes are contacted by the dragon, why they accept the call to become heroes, and how they meet each other. Subsequent arcs will take them to different regions of the world, facing the resident lieutenants of the 108 Demons until they gain enough power to face the Demons themselves.

ELEMENTS

Shounen stories are superhero stories in disguise, with martial arts being the superpowers.

THEMATIC CHARACTERS

Both heroes and villains have a "theme" to them, which colors not only their personality but also their appearance and their powers. For example, Ruon the Wolf of the Steppes will have a Penetrating Strike power called "Wolf Fang" and may even have a dire wolf minion.

MAGIC

For those heroes who are not so much into the physical combat aspect of the genre, the dragon also teaches sorcery. The actual effects of a Fire Dragon Punch technique will not be very different from a Heavenly Flame Ribbon spell, but the method of delivery will distinguish a sorcerer hero from a martial artist.

POST-APOCALYPTIC WORLD

The backdrop for this story owes a lot to 80s anime and Hollywood, with scenarios made up of scorching deserts dotted with the dusty ruins of a formerly modern city. It's not that there are no green places on Earth anymore, it's just that they don't convey the same feeling of despair and desolation. People survive on a day-to-day basis, and altruism and community spirit are only found in the typical hidden village utopia that the heroes must defend from marauding bandits.

SHARDS: UNSUNG DESTINY

Genre: Miscellaneous	**Power Level:** 10
Scope: Ongoing series	**Tech Level:** 3

Theme and Tone: Vary, but discovery and wonder should permeate any particular theme a story in this setting may have.

Story Elements: Mysterious organizations, enigmatic aliens, mecha, pets, magical girls/boys.

Synopsis: Since Earth crossed the tail of the Shiva comet, ordinary people can gain extraordinary powers by attuning to crystals known as Shivan shards. The shards can manifest a person's innermost desire in a combat-ready form, but what people do not know is that there are beings inside each shard, and what they will do in the future can exalt or condemn humanity.

The world changed when the Shiva Comet narrowly missed Earth's orbit. Its tail left a legacy in the form of crystals that grant certain people spectacular powers, which they use as they see fit. Shiva also left another gift for humanity—we're no longer alone on our planet.

Shards: Unsung Destiny is the main setting for a *Mecha & Manga* game. It incorporates most of the optional rules in this book and is open enough to let you play almost any manga and anime genre, starting from its central premise.

If you wish, you can even incorporate elements of *Shards* into existing *Mutants & Masterminds* settings. In *Freedom City,* limit the effects of the Shiva comet to southeastern Asia, centered primarily on the Japanese islands. You can make the arrival of the shards a recent event or an ancient one, perhaps connected with the mysterious daka crystals (*Freedom City,* page 87). The Shiva comet and its aftereffects is also a good breakout for a *Paragons* setting, perhaps with a greater extent of breathers and weavers with innate paranormal powers derived from Shivan shards.

BACKGROUND

Shards: Unsung Destiny takes place mostly in Tokyo, in a future that's very near chronologically but far away in every other aspect.

SHIVA

In the year 2010, astronomers around the world discovered with horror that a comet had been hiding its route behind the Sun for an unknown number of years, maybe even centuries. The path was charted and discovered to cross Earth's orbital path.

In the space of a few months, panic and chaos gripped the world as calculations between several specialists conflicted. Some ensured that the comet would crash into our planet, while others presented proof that it would pass by. There were several upheavals that the different governments were hard-pressed to control while planning disaster scenarios. Old religions were tested, and new cults were born and died as their members killed themselves before the promised end of the world.

By the end of the year, Christmas was celebrated with a gigantic new star in the sky. The astronomer that discovered the comet named it "Shiva," after the Hindu god whose last dance would mark the end of days.

Shiva missed the Earth by hundreds of kilometers, which, in astronomical scale, is a hair's breadth.

Coastal cities suffered from tidal waves, while earthquakes along fault lines created chain earthquakes. Despite the rash of disasters, people confronted them with relief, hope, and happiness, because the alternative could have been much, much worse. Still, the most spectacular gift from Shiva were several weeks of lights in the sky, as ice crystals from its tail melted as they entered Earth's atmosphere.

The crystal rain showered over several parts of the world, and people also were gifted with shimmering rivers and sparkling forests, until whatever substances the comet's tail was composed of sank into the ground and became part of the world's ecology.

THE SHIVAN SHARDS

A lot of research studied the Shivan substances. It started as a secret, but soon it spread that there were spots all over the world where large crystal formations began to appear, as fungus colonies spread in the rain. Most of these crystals were compounds of Shivan matter with the local minerals it bonded with when it touched the ground, and they had the novel effect of changing color according to the general mood around them.

The Shivan shards were psychoactive; that is, they reacted to thought, just as quartz reacts to electricity by emitting periodic pulses. Industry did not see much other use in the crystals and abandoned them for any use other than cheap jewelry.

It wasn't until 2012 that it was revealed that the shards were much more than cheap gemstones. A spelunker found a vein of pure Shivan shards deep in a South American cavern. These shards didn't bond with local minerals but grew independently. When smugglers beset the solitary explorer as he exited the cave, the fragments he had taken as a keepsake reacted by manifesting an enormous three-headed hound with a strange biomechanical appearance. The hound dispatched the attackers.

The same thing happened in other locations where pure Shivan shards surfaced. Further research concluded that in their pure state, the shards were not only able to resonate with surrounding emotions but synchronize to the unique brain patterns of an individual and create matter responding to his wishes. The age of the Focusers had come.

THE FOCUSERS

Shivan shards are now produced synthetically, and the imprinting process is easy and within reach of people with the right combination of mental strength and monetary funds. The governments closely monitor these shards, but private enterprises won the right to produce their own and hire people to imprint them.

The people who are able to imprint a Shivan shard and manifest something out of the synchronization are called Focusers, because what they do is basically focus a deeply entrenched wish into the shard, which resonates and makes it real. Imprinting happens only once, and then the shard does not accept further manipulation of its resonance. A Focuser can bring forth his mind's desire as much as he wants, but he's stuck with the particular desire he had when the imprinting happened.

Focusers hire out as mercenaries, specialists, entertainers, security, or other such professions, depending on how they obtained their shards. Others turn to crime, using the powers granted by the Shivan shard for their own selfish ends.

There are three types of Focusers, registered and researched by several international organizations.

- **Handlers:** These Focusers secretly wish for a guardian and a companion, and their Shivan shards manifest a creature that obeys them, protects them, and even fights for them. The creature comes from the Focuser's subconscious and echoes his particular preferences, culture, and personality.
- **Riders:** A Rider doesn't create something to fight for her but rather focuses her Shivan shard into a suit of armor around her, increasing her size, strength, protection, and bestowing several other gifts, depending on the Focuser's heart.

- **Wielders:** Unlike the other two types of Focusers, Wielders like to test their skills in a contest between Shivans. They manifest a tool (most commonly a weapon). This tool enhances their skill with it, but it also has its own powers that it imparts upon the Focuser.

  These Focusers wear their Shivan shard somewhere visible on their bodies, mostly as a necklace or pendant. Once imprinted with a particular shard, a Focuser cannot use any other shard except his own, until it is somehow destroyed. Also, nobody can use a shard that has already been imprinted.

  There are rumors about two more types of Focusers; they do not need to wear their shard but have somehow absorbed their power. This is, of course, pure speculation, as no one knows exactly how a Shivan shard works, only that it does.
- **Breathers:** These Focusers do not imprint with a shard but instead were immersed in Shivan matter or, more commonly, breathed it in until it coated their lungs. Breathers can manifest their wishes upon their own bodies, creating strange powers like metamorphosis or, more commonly, an increase in news about super-powered martial artists.
- **Weavers:** These Focusers are not sure why they can understand the shards intuitively, but they do. Weavers can see the resonance fields of all Shivan shards around them, even those floating around as dust. They later learn how to alter the flow and make even imprinted shards contribute to bringing their improvised wish into reality, as if by magic.



SHIVAS AND SHIVANS

The Focusers' manifestations, be them a beast, a mecha suit, or a weapon, came to be known as "Shivas," and media and other sources adopted that name.

The Shivas are not independent beings or objects. They are the wishes of their Focusers come true, and thus, they are bound together. A Focuser cannot manifest his Shiva without his shard, and the Shiva cannot appear out of the shard without the Focuser's will.

There is an important distinction to make, however. "Shivas" are the manifestation of the Focusers using their Shivan shards.

The "Shivans" are the beings that make it happen.

Shivans do not call themselves that, of course, but in truth, they don't call themselves anything, because they have no need of names.

The Shivans are a race of beings of pure thought, but they need a physical anchor to subsist, mainly crystals. The Shivan comet was a Shivan colony ship suffering a malfunction. They never intended to land on Earth, much less collide with it, since our planet's psychosphere is toxic to them. They had no choice, though, and they ejected all the crystal matter in the comet towards Earth, hoping to save as many of their race as they could.

The crystal growths that appeared on the planet are in reality Shivan bunkers and colonies.

Shivans were not aware that the toxic psychosphere of Earth actually was generated by a sentient species, and they learned to recognize individual humans much later. Human thought and Shivan existence are barely compatible, so the Shivan engineers instilled their crystals with the ability to translate human thoughts into a form that Shivans could understand and subsist on. They are not mental leeches, just as humans are not oxygen vampires.

The pure Shivan shards are the main colonies of the psychic aliens, who noted that they were being broken off by greedy or curious humans. This did not affect the Shivans, as they have no true physical existence, but they discovered that people who could become Focusers also empowered the Shivans themselves. So, they inspired the synthesis of artificial shards, which allowed them to expand and subsist and believe they had actually found a new home.

It wasn't until later that Shivans realized that the human-Shivan interface had an unexpected byproduct: the Shiva manifestations. Shivans were fascinated with this phenomenon, recognizing the untapped psychic potential in humans that could use what was otherwise the psychic refuse of their alien metabolism to create matter.

Humans are completely unaware of the Shivans that power their shards, although some experienced or talented Focusers have had glimpses of the

thought race but aren't equipped with the conceptual tools to understand what they see.

Shivans are completely unaware that they had *too* much success in creating the interface crystals. Human thought has begun to influence and warp them, and those Shivans who are bonded with a Focuser's shard are changing, reflecting the subconscious desires of their host.

THE ASURAS

There are rumors kept under guard by the government and corporations that employ Focusers. These rumors suggest that Focusers can lose control of their shard and let their Shivas wander free, or the Shivas devour the Focuser and become monsters. Following with the Hindu theme started by the astrologer that named the original comet, these monsters are called Asuras, after the antagonistic deities of Hindu myth.

The rumors are true. Sometimes, the psychic interface between a Focuser and the Shivan alien bonded to his shard becomes too strong, and they both become warped beyond recognition. The human goes insane, and the Shivan becomes an Asura.

So far, the Asuras' existence has been kept from public view, with only a handful of Asura-hunting Focusers knowing about them outside the proper authorities, but it's only a matter of time before an Asura manifests in a way that cannot be covered up. Then, the society that admired Focusers will certainly turn against them.

On the Shivans' plane of existence, the situation is strangely alike. Since the Shivans need the crystals to survive, those few who know of the Asura phenomenon are not divulging it, for the Shivans would panic and try to disengage from the crystals the humans have grown and wear, which would in turn overcrowd the virgin crystals that remain hidden, endangering all of the Shivans surviving on Earth.

ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations were created or adapted to deal with the Focusers and the Shivan phenomenon.

DEVA

Led jointly by Indian and Japanese entrepreneurs Sanjit Kaur and Senichi Yoshida, DEVA operates publicly as a mixture between a research lab and a mercenary agency. They are at the forefront of Shiva research and hold the patent for the purest formula of synthetic Shivan shards. They grow their own crystals and conduct international and open testing to find people with the strength of will to become Focusers, who they train and release unto the world... under contract.

DEVA Focusers are the best in the world, with the strongest Shivas and the ability to use them properly. For that, potential Focusers undergo two years of intensive training and education that includes tactical as well as martial skills.

DEVA scientists know about the Asura phenomenon, and they are close to figuring out how it happens, although the why is still beyond their reach.

As a mercenary outfit, DEVA has representatives and offices all over the world, where local individuals can go and request the contract of a Focuser for a particular mission. DEVA claims that it does not accept military contracts, but once free from their initial contracts, Focusers can do as they please with their lives, and many have been recruited by their parent nation's army.

DEVA has the potential to become an evil organization bent on world conquest or be the world's protector against the growing threat of the Asuras. Right now, it stands at the crossroads between both paths, and the actions of executives and employees will dictate which way it goes.

SKYFIRE CARTEL

The most dangerous criminal organization in the world is also the youngest. Skyfire splintered from Colombian paramilitaries when their leader became a Rider. Starting small, they claimed a portion of Colombia's territory as their own and used their growing resources to gather more Shivan shards. In the space of months, their influence had grown, and their alliance with other criminal organizations became mergers, until Skyfire was formed.

The cartel's leadership consists entirely of Focusers, and rumors say that their leader is a Weaver. They recruit freelance Focusers to do dirty jobs and welcome any who show the proper ruthlessness as well as respect for their leaders. This group's ultimate goals are unknown.

S-SWAT

The Shivan Special Weapons and Tactics is a rapid response team sponsored mainly by the U.S. but under executive command of Interpol. All the field operatives of S-SWAT are Focusers, with each squad composed of a balanced mix of Riders, Handlers, and Wielders. Mission control personnel are not Focusers, usually, with the exception of Lt. Shauna Cassidy, the S-SWAT's poster girl and public relations face, who is a Handler whose Shiva excels at surveillance rather than combat.

The S-SWAT's mission is to control the criminal Focuser population, although in recent months, it has branched towards hunting and destroying Asuras, missions that it conducts in utter secrecy.

THE SQUADS

A few Focusers have gathered in teams that operate independently as mercenaries. They are known collectively as the "squads" and vary greatly in personality, capabilities, and temperament, from the heavy artillery mercenary soldiers of The Black Hounds to the security consultants of Splinter, Inc.

Much to the legitimate squads' chagrin, disorganized gangs of rogue Focusers not yet absorbed by Skyfire are also called "squads."

THE WHISPERING DARK

Founded by DEVA ex-employee Dr. Rakhi Balan, the Whispering Dark is a cult that sees the Shivan shards as gifts from the divine to make humans into demigods and wage the ultimate war of Devas against Asuras. Rakhi herself is a talented Focuser, but her specific talent is in doubt, with reports saying indicating she is either a Handler or a Rider, as there is photographic evidence of a great Shivan beast in the form of the goddess Kali, but it's unclear whether it's a summoned beast or a shaped armor.

While supposedly on the "good" side, the Whispering Dark is not above abducting people to make into new Focusers, regular cultists, or sacrifices. They do fight Asuras when they appear, but the brainwashing they undergo makes it much more likely that a cultist Focuser will himself become an Asura.

THE HERALDS

An urban legend amongst Focusers speaks of the Heralds, Focusers who have melded with their shards and understand the truth behind them. The truth is that Heralds do exist, but they were never normal Focusers in the first place, but rather Breathers and Weavers. Hailing mostly from the Himalayas and China's highlands, the leader of the Heralds is a Buddhist monk who breathed in a large amount of Shivan shard dust when Earth crossed the comet's tail, learning to speak to the Shivans themselves.

So far, the Heralds are the only group that knows about the Shivans, and their contacts on the other side are the only ones in direct communication with humans. Both parties understand the dangers of the Asuras and travel the world in search of others who can understand the truth.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

This is a small sample of the movers and shakers in the world of Focusers.

SANJIT KAUR AND SENICHI YOSHIDA

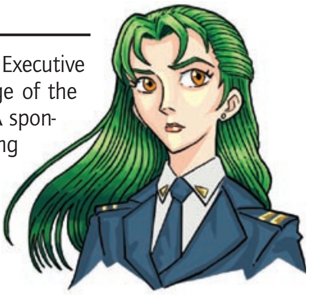
Founders and owners of DEVA, they are businessmen with a healthy curiosity about science and a philanthropic streak. They headed the reconstruction efforts in Asia after the various environmental disasters that Shiva left in its wake, and their workers were the first to discover the properties of the



Shivan fragments. While each wor from their offices in New Delhi an Tokyo respectively, they are in clos contact all the time.

They fashion themselves as patro of science and are largely uninvolved the actual scientific efforts of DEVA letting the scientists do their work alone. However, they are concerned about ethics, and any report of unethical practices by an employee, Focuser or not, will earn their attention and prompt disciplinary action.

MAYA TOHO



This young Japanese woman is the Chief Executive of Focuser Affairs at DEVA. She's in charge of the various Focuser training centers that DEVA sponsors as well as doing some hands-on teaching on her own. In her early thirties, she can translate the education she received at the Japanese Defense Force (where she reached the rank of Captain) to both tactical training and management, and she has a direct approach to both, coordinating the operations of DEVA Focuser teams in the field.

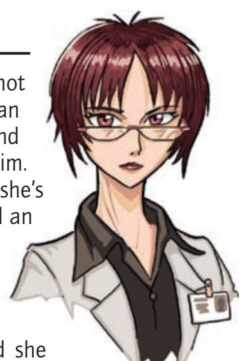
ARSENE LACAN



An Englishman who migrated to India in his youth, he was recruited by Sanjit Kaur to be the chairman of DEVA. He has an inscrutable attitude and a commitment to efficiency and DEVA's ideals. He often meddles in the administration of both the scientific and tactical wings of the organization, bugging Mrs. Toho and Dr. Minobe to no end.

Arsene Lacan is a Breather, a fact he hides very well. He's also in direct communication with a Shivan faction, which grants him a special understanding of all situations involving the Shivan shards. So, he acts as an undercover spiritual guide for DEVA Focusers.

DR. KAEDE MINOBE



Director of DEVA's research wing, Dr. Minobe is not the first Dr. Minobe to lead research into the Shivan research. Kaede was her husband's partner and assistant, and most of the insights belonged to him. However, a lab accident claimed his life, and now she's continuing his work. Her husband's death planted an obsession inside Dr. Minobe's mind, and that is to use the Shivan shards to try to bring him back. To reach that end, she has abandoned all ethics and morals, conducting secret experiments with DEVA's funds. She knows about the Asuras, and she has created a few on purpose, unleashing them to see what the interaction of the Asuran and Shivan shards yields.

She has slowly replaced the leadership of the research department with ambitious people loyal to her and likewise devoid of ethics. She has no plans to subvert DEVA itself, but some of her advisors do have a mind for politics.

SKYFIRE



Aside from his closest lieutenants, very few people have seen the leader of the Skyfire Cartel outside of his Shiva armor. As an accomplished Rider, he can manifest his Shiva for extended periods, and he is careful never to appear in "public" exposed. This practice has saved his life several times, both from police forces as well as criminal rivals. He was careful to erase all traces of his identity, and only his alias remains. His plans are unknown, but many think that soon he will mobilize the cartel to try to usurp political power in any given country.

Skyfire is aware of the Asura phenomenon, but not consciously. He *is* an Asura, but his will was too strong to allow his Shivan fragment to dominate or devour him. He's now a being of darkness and terror, and while the vestiges of his rational mind put forth plans that further the goals of the cartel, his corrupted subconscious steers them towards the ultimate destruction of humanity.

SOREN RAGNI



An ex-Marine working as a security consultant, Soren Ragni found his shard during a contracted mission. Realizing the potential of his new status as a Focuser, he quit his employment and founded his own mercenary outfit, Black Hound Security. He kept an eye open for other Focusers that might be interested in the kind of job he had to offer, and soon he had gathered a team composed of other ex-soldiers from around the world, plus a few talented rookies he trained from the ground up. He's a professional and makes damn sure all Focusers and non-Focusers employed by Black Hound stick to his high standards, based on the Geneva Conventions, especially when one day he might be fighting for one side and the next month for the other. In his business, respectability and a reputation for fairness can literally save one's life.

YOUKO SHIRATORI



Splinter, Inc. is the brainchild of teenage prodigy Youko Shiratori. She's not a Focuser herself, but she has a keen mind for business and an enterprising personality. When she first heard about Focusers, she knew that there would be many confused people trying to find a way to make a living, so she started an online community for Focusers called Splinter.net (all domain names with "shard" were already taken). After a few months, and as soon as she turned 18, she engaged phase two of her plan and went corporate, pulling in the connections she'd made into a loose but worldwide headhunting agency that specializes in Focusers.

She's a smart and capable young lady, and she has files on every registered Focuser on the planet, as well as a few rogues and freelancers. She knows there's something that's keeping DEVA and S-SWAT on their toes, but she hasn't found out what. She'll gladly pay anyone for the information and pull in a few favors, as well.

CMMDR. KLAUS ROMMEL



The commanding officer of S-SWAT is a dour German Wielder. He was still a member of Germany's GSG9 counterterrorist force when he imprinted his Shivan shard, and he was later "donated" to the Interpol's S-SWAT, who designated him as the leader of the all-Focuser police strike teams. He barely survived his first encounter with an Asura, but he learned a lot about how to fight them. He has a dim view of independent Focusers, a grudging respect for DEVA personnel, and a complete disdain for mercenaries. To him, being a Focuser is as much a burden as it is a responsibility and an honor, but his unflinching sense of duty has made the Shivan inhabiting his shard into an outspoken leader on the Shivan side of things, and the huge Zweihander sword they manifest into a formidable and unstoppable weapon.

LT. SHAUNA CASSIDY



An Irish firebrand of a girl, she found a Shivan in the middle of a stone circle back home. Sh just a teenager then, but curiosity got the b her and she imprinted the shard successfully ing the rare ability to manifest not one, bu several Shiva beasts. Being a Handler has somewhat satisfied her irrepressible curiosity. She learned to better control her Shivas at a DEVA academy, but upon graduation, accepted the recruitment offer of the S-SWAT. She received basic combat training, but her specialty is intelligence gathering and mission control. Thanks to her adorable looks and magnetic personality, she's also the S-SWAT's spokesperson and public face.

DR. RAKHI BALAN, "KALI"



Once Dr. Gotoh Minobe's assistant, Dr. Rakhi Balan suffered in the same accident that took the DEVA scientist's life. She became a Weaver, as loose filaments of Shivan crystal embedded in her skin. Rather than undergo treatment to find out what effect the accident had on her, she fled the accident's site, emptied her bank accounts, and went into hiding. Years later, she reemerged as the leader of the Whispering Dark. She's quite insane, believing herself to be an avatar of the goddess Kali. While she can weave into existence the likeness of the goddess as either an armor or an independent creature, she actually has no contact with the Shivans themselves; her madness is all her own, which makes her curiously immune to becoming an Asura. She's dangerous enough already.

THE DREAMER



The leader of the Heralds is not a human, but a Shivan who has studied human thought in detail since the thought race discovered their unwitting neighbors and hosts. He bonded himself with a Chinese monk, who became a Breather and spiritual guide of the Heralds on the human side. Thanks to a combination of his own enlightenment and his host's, the Dreamer can travel around the world in the world of dreams, sending messages and prophecies to people capable of receiving them, although not always of interpreting them. He wishes to bring humans and Shivans together, but he knows that neither race is ready to understand each other fully, despite sharing the surface of the same planet.

PLOT FRAMEWORKS

The basic premise of *Shards: Unsung Destiny* offers the starting point for many genres and series, as well as tones, themes, and moods. The following are just a few of the series you can assemble with the background presented.

DEVA WARRIOR SHIVAN

You can play *Shards* as a typical mecha story of invading monsters and empowered teenagers. The protagonists discover their Shivan shards and DEVA recruits them to spearhead the battle against the Asuras, who begin as monsters, until the heroes learn that they used to be Focusers, just like them.

The heroes are unprepared for combat and struggle with insecurities and the relationships they have towards each other, mixed in with brutal fights against monstrous Asuras with weapons and powers they are just learning to master.

As the series progresses, the heroes will find out about the Shivans and the true nature of the Asuras, probably as one of their own betrays them or a trusted friend becomes the leader of the Asuras. The Asuras will become increasingly powerful, eventually overrunning normal Focusers, until the heroes step up and give them a final battle.

SHARD FIGHTERS!

A lighthearted series, Shard Fighters! has the heroes participating in a tournament league that pits Handlers against each other. The Shiva pets are rather cute, and no real harm comes to anyone with each mock battle.

The series will follow the heroes' adventures as they find different opponents to defeat until they gain a title or something. Occasionally, they will stumble upon heinous plots to rule the world, which they will foil with the help of their Shiva pets.

OUT OF FOCUS

Freelance Focusers have it rough, and none has it rougher than the heroes. This is an action series with many humorous overtones, with heroes facing silly challenges to their investigation and problem-solving skills, until they hit upon a serious problem and the jokes are saved for a better time.

As freelancers, the heroes will not gain a lot of respect from Focusers sponsored by organizations like DEVA or S-SWAT, but they will be the only ones at hand to deal with criminal Focusers, like the Skyfire Cartel.

A good way to guide the series is for the heroes to be associates of Splinter, Inc., who will hand them missions and pay them on an assignment basis (although curiously the heroes will always be broke). The missions can be just about anything, from saving a little girl's kitten from a Yakuza mansion to capturing a dangerous criminal.

Eventually, they will inadvertently stumble upon a case that's so serious that it will challenge every bit of resourcefulness and power at their disposal.

SPLINTER SOUL

More subdued tones are possible, even for a premise that grants great powers to its protagonists. In this framework, the Focusers are a well-kept secret, and not just anyone can become one. The different organizations that employ Focusers can be at war with each other or compete over goals that are more selfish.

Heroes may not have wished to become Focusers, but a shard imprinted upon them by accident or by the designs of a sinister figure in the higher tiers of authority. Once they have the power, though, they have to use it to fight other Focusers, some of which are rather psychotic, just a little push from becoming Asuras.

However, the heroes have something special, and their shard imprinting allows them to be aware of the Shivan beings that power the shards. Together, they will unite to solve the mystery of the shards and perhaps initiate or stop a plan to sever the worlds of humans and Shivans forever.

SHIVAN BATTLER HARU

Maybe it wasn't a talking cat, but picking up a gorgeous gemstone can have the same consequences: creating a magical girl. Under this framework, the only Focusers in the world are a select few group of magical girls (or boys, for awkwardness), each with a unique personality and way to manifest a Shiva.

The villain of this story is the King of the Asura, who wants to collect all the Shivan shards that grow on Earth to dominate the Shivans. The thought alien that inhabits the shard of each hero(ine) becomes a mentor and ally that will help the inexperienced Focuser to do what's right and keep at bay the age of darkness that would surely start if the Asura King managed to collect all the shards.

DIAMOND SHIELD

Diamond Shield is the name of a new S-SWAT squadron, composed of both police and civilian Focusers that cooperate to solve a wide range of cases. As new members of Diamond Shield, the heroes are treated to the rough and tumble life of the S-SWAT troopers. The first few missions will feature normal criminals, if a little heavy on the firepower. On one such case, they will stumble over evidence that points out some of the deeper secrets of the story.

There is no overarching villain in this framework, but every few cases will advance an overall story, such as an encounter with Skyfire minions trafficking Shivan dust that ties with a later case about a new drug hitting the market, until all the pieces start falling together to reveal a larger, sinister plot.

ELEMENTS

To play a series based on the *Shards: Unsung Destiny* framework, you need to add the following to the set of rules you will handle:

PSYCHOSPHERE

The psychosphere is the psychic environment of Earth, a parallel dimension that covers the world and originates in the thoughts and feelings of all the creatures on the planet. Humans, being the dominant sentient species, are the main contributors to Earth's psychosphere (like trees provide oxygen to the atmosphere).

The psychosphere is a parallel dimension that can be perceived with a Super-Sense, but it cannot be reached by Super-Movement, mostly because people are already there, just not aware of it. A hero who can see in the psychospheric spectrum gains a +2 bonus on Notice and Sense Motive checks against sentient beings, as he can see faint shimmering auras that indicate states of mind and meanings.

All telepathic and dream communications travel through the psychosphere. While dreams do influence the quality of the surrounding psychosphere, dreams only happen inside a dreamer's head and cannot be seen from outside, even with the "normal" psychospheric sense. A specific Super-Movement (dimensional travel to dreams) must be purchased, which is a rare power for a Shiva to have.

Perceiving the psychosphere allows a hero to see Shivans inside a Shiva shard (Notice check DC 25) and the true human identity of Asuras (Sense Motive DC 20).

Knowledge (arcane lore) covers the psychosphere, although the behavioral sciences and physical sciences can get some things right, too.

SHIVAN SHARDS

You can purchase a Shivan shard as a Device (easy to take away; Restricted [only by you]), costing 5 power points per rank.

- **Riders:** The device points purchase the traits that the hero acquires when manifesting his Shiva mecha armor. This includes at least 4 ranks of Growth (Innate). As mecha armor, you can purchase all the traits and features available to mecha found in **Chapter 3: Mecha.**
- **Wielders:** The most normal use of Device, the points are spent freely to choose the Shiva weapon's powers, although, almost as a requisite, the Blast or Strike powers should be purchased. Being weapons for the most part, these Shivas can make use of the martial arts options found in **Chapter 4: Martial Arts.**
- **Handlers:** All of the device points are used for the Summon (Shiva Creature) power. A Shiva pet is always Heroic, but it may or may not be Fanatical. In addition, you might use the feats and options for pets found in **Chapter 5: Pets.**
- **Breathers and Weavers:** These Focusers do not purchase the Device power, but rather spend their power points freely, for they have internalized the Shivan shards' power into themselves. Weavers often purchase Magic as well as the Ritualist feat, to represent the flexibility with which they use their Shivan powers.

While the particular powers of each Shiva manifestation can be countered or cancelled with Nullify, the manifestations themselves cannot be. Only when the Focuser is knocked unconscious does the Shiva disappear.

Some shards can come with the Activation drawback (see **Chapter 2: Heroes**) or the Duration flaw to alter the normal instant and automatic activation of Shivan shards. A rarer modifier is a Power Loss drawback that requires a Focuser to do something to manifest his Shiva, such as a spoken invocation, a dance number, or something more severe, like covering the shard with his own blood (an automatic Injured condition).

SHIVAN TAINT

Humans have the potential, but not the capacity, to shape the influence of the psychosphere into physical matter. The Shivan shards help them focus this potential (hence the name "Focuser") and do all the hard work for the human mind. This is not without consequences, though, which are just being discovered by DEVA researchers.

When a Focuser manifests his Shiva, a direct and steady link is created between the psychosphere, the Focuser, and the world outside. Due to the remaining impurities in Shivan shards and the inexperience of the human mind, this flow spikes and ebbs, potentially damaging the Focuser. This damage is called Shivan taint.

All Focuser characters get the following drawback, a major, common drawback worth 4 power points:

SHIVAN TAINT

The feedback with your shard twists both you and the Shivan bonded to the shard. Every time you score a natural 20 on the die when using a Shivan power, the Shard launches a mental attack at you. You must make a Will save (DC 10 + number of ranks in the Device power used to purchase the Shivan shard). This is treated as a Toughness check for the purpose of failure thresholds and conditions.

If you fail the save by less than 5, you gain a Tainted condition (equivalent to Bruised, imposing a –1 penalty on further Will saves to resist Shivan Taint). If you fail the save by 5 or more, you gain a Tainted condition and become Dazed for 1 round. If you fail the save by 10 or more, you gain the previous conditions and become Corrupted. If you fail the save by 15 or more, you gain a Tainted condition, become Dazed for 1 round, and gain the Twisted condition.

- *Corrupted:* You are infused with a feeling of power like never you have felt before. You lose all regard for laws and mores that try to bind you, and you indulge in any excess that attracts you.
- *Twisted:* You become catatonic, lost in an inner world made by your desires as enhanced by the Shivan shard. You must make an immediate Will save and additional saves each hour (DC 10 +1 per previous save). Success means that you resist the temptation and hold on to yourself. If you succeed by 10 or more or roll a natural 20, you snap out of your state and lose the Twisted condition. If you fail, your Shiva manifests and devours you. Congratulations, you are now an Asura.

You can try to eliminate a Tainted condition each minute with a free Wisdom check (DC 10). After 8 hours, you can try to eliminate the Corrupted condition with the same Wisdom check.

Only Breathers and Weavers can learn the Healing (Shivan taint damage) power. Focusers must usually heal on their own.

Alternately, Gamemasters can use the Taint optional rules from *Mastermind's Manual* (pages 87-91) for a more detailed treatment of Shivan Taint. Characters gain taint points from failing Will saves when using Shivan powers, as detailed at the start of this section, and accumulated taint points cause physical and mental drawbacks, leading to mutation into an Asura.

ASURAS

An Asura is a horrific meld between human, Shiva, and Shivan manifestation, all twisted beyond recognition as their essences mesh and mix. The traits of an Asura are the same as the Focuser that engendered it, plus those granted by the Shivan shard, now made into permanent powers as part of the Asura's very self. The Asura also gains 30 extra power points to purchase new traits, often Protection and Growth. It's impossible to recognize the Focuser under the Asura form, unless another Focuser can look into the psychosphere, and even then, it's difficult.

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Alejandro Melchor is a freelancer by vocation, employed at a translation firm by necessity (who knew the ability to write in two different languages was so marketable?). He has a long, but spotty and mostly obscure, career in role-playing games, starting with the defunct *Trinity* sci-fi game from White Wolf, passing through a productive stint as *d20* staff writer at Mongoose Publishing and continuing today as a hunter of opportunities for various pet projects in diverse game systems.

His interest in manga and anime dates back to college, but only after graduating did he become the editor of a local fanzine in his native Mexico City where he brushed shoulders with many colorful characters (on and off the pages and screen), and much later the editorial coordinator of a doomed anime magazine. He combines his love for writing with a secondary love for drawing through his online webcomic, "Nahast: Lands of Strife" (*http://nahast.spiderforest.com*) which shows the influence of all those years of watching anime and reading manga, plus a healthy dose of fantasy gaming, martial arts films, and geeky pursuits like anthropology and narratology.

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When Steve first became *Mutants & Masterminds* developer, he put together a master list of books he wanted to do for the line. "Some sort of *manga* sourcebook" was on that list, and he's glad to see *Mecha & Manga* finally realized through the work of a lot of very talented people. Steve started working as a freelance writer and designer in 1995 and has been active in the RPG industry ever since. He has written or contributed to well over a hundred different books and numerous game lines, including *Mutants & Masterminds*, *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*, and *A Song of Ice and Fire Roleplaying* for Green Ronin Publishing.

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EMPTY ROOM STUDIOS, INTERIOR ART

Empty Room Studios provides high quality illustration and writing services for the creative needs of companies and studios in the entertainment industry- namely comics, games and television/film. By utilizing a work system similar to those found in company art departments, we capitalize on the talents of our studio members by developing long-term relationships with each of our clients through integrity, open communication, mutual respect, and fast production time.With a combination of talent and a professional work ethic, Empty Room Studios has developed a reputation for being dependable, professional and for delivering nothing less than quality, originality and experience. www.emptyroomstudios.com

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